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THE CHURCHES AT THE
CROSS-ROADS

THE CHURCHES AT THE CROSS-ROADS

A STUDY IN CHURCH UNITY

BY

J. H. SHAKESPEARE, M.A.

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PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on Thy whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery: and, by the tranquil operation of Thy perpetual Providence, carry out the work of man's salvation; and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and all things are returning to perfection through Him from Whom they took their origin, even through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gelasian Sacramentary.

TO THE MEMORY OF
ALBERT FITZGIBBON RILEY
WHO ALWAYS HELPED ME
AND TO HIS DAUGHTER
ISABEL
WHO NOW DOES THE SAME

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THE CHURCHES AT THE CROSS-ROADS

CHAPTER I

THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW

“Then are there fresher mornings mounting east
Than ever yet have dawned, sing we !”

GEORGE MEREDITH.

MOST of us who are living to-day have been born into one world and have come to live in another. Measured by the period of human history, the change has had the suddenness of the tropical dawn. Measured by the period of human life, it has still been swift and even catastrophic. Sometimes as we have made our way along a cliff, casting glances continually far out to sea, a white mist has rolled up with a ghostly silence, enveloped us and the view, and hidden everything from our eyes. Perhaps it has made our footsteps uncertain and perilous. Or it may have been the reverse process, with like suddenness. The sea-mist has lifted, and we have seen the waves lapping on the shore under the delightful

sunlight and the fishing boats rocking up and down. In the same way, in our time, the scenery of life has been changed. Landmarks and institutions are questioned or removed. The atmosphere around us is different. The things which we had regarded as secure and stable have dissolved or vanished. The individual life has in all ages been open to desperate onslaughts of fortune, but the changes I have in mind are on a wider scale: they are social and national. They began before the Great War, and they have been enormously accelerated and extended by its demands, upheavals and tragedies. It is the bare truth that we are living in a new world.

We may take it for granted that our world will never be the same again. Values have changed, and things to which men once clung passionately, and which they regarded as a sufficient ground of separation between Churches, have shrunk to very small proportions before the solemn issues and the tremendous problems which confront all the Churches. The real religious questions of to-day have little or nothing to do with the sectarian conflicts of even twenty years ago. We may find a parallel in the Puritan Revolution. New thoughts had come into men's minds. The Bible was in their hands. Violent social and religious movements like the Rise of the Anabaptists had swept across Europe, and these had an inevitable and powerful re-

action in England itself. The conceptions and theories which were so dear and sacred to James I, Charles I, and to Laud and Strafford were the very stuff of revolution. Kings and statesmen blundered blindly on, and were quite unaware of the forces which were gathering around them. There was one man in the England of that day who had a vision of the new world which stretched out its beckoning hands to him. Up to that time the genius of John Milton had been given to the music and witchery of *Comus*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, but there was a deeper and sterner note in *Lycidas*:—

“But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

He laid aside the poet's mantle. He went out to “pastures new.” He thought it base to be seeking “intellectual culture” while his fellow-countrymen were fighting for liberty. The closing exquisite lines of *Lycidas* are really the taking up of a great challenge from a new time:—

“Thus sang the uncouth Swain^w to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals grey;
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his *Doric* lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropped into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.”

The failure to perceive the meaning of

the changes which are taking place in the thoughts of men, in the mood, temperament and convictions of our own generation, may be disastrous. It has been so in regard to the Russian Revolution. It may be that no human wisdom could have averted it, for it was the explosion of long-pent-up wrongs and wickednesses. But at least all possibility of a constitutional settlement, peaceful and stable, was at an end when the Czar rejected the warnings of the British Ambassador that he must make a choice between two paths, one of which would lead to victory and the other to revolution and disaster. Yet these portents and precedents of history pale into insignificance before the blindness of the leaders of that Jewish Church which did not know the day of its visitation, but rejected Him Who cried, as He beheld the doomed city, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." In this tragedy of history we may perceive a warning for the Church of our own day.

There are three outstanding characteristics of this new world which we may examine. They are by no means exhaustive, but they are characteristics to which the Church must give grave consideration.

(1) The blessings and gifts of civilization have to be paid for, as never before, in an

extravagant expenditure of nervous force by the men and women, in a less degree by the children, in that new world of which we form a part. The cost of our advanced civilization is very high. Payment has to be made for it at every stage in nerve and heart and brain. We have only to recall the more recent inventions which aim at the practical obliteration of space and time, or to reflect upon the improvements which have been effected in the more familiar inventions of the preceding hundred years. What we call the conveniences and comforts of life have been multiplied indefinitely. The rush of life is upon us. In all literature life has been likened to a race or to a conflict, but the race was never so swift or the conflict so fierce as it is to-day. How quiet and idyllic often seems to us that bygone world with no daily press, no widespread postal system, that world in which travel was costly and infrequent and a visit to London the event of a lifetime. The artificial life which man has constructed for himself carries with it no balm and no healing. Apart from the strain which is upon us all from the sorrows, anxieties, tensions and privations of the present hour, modern inventions and appliances have become part of the world in which we must live even in the time of peace, and the strain and the rush will be intensified as science proceeds and commerce becomes more exacting.

The world of unrest requires the Church to bring to it a certain atmosphere and tone. The Church does not belong to the changing order of things or to the present age alone. It comes out of the past. It has seen many suns rise and set. A haven for storm-tossed humanity, a refuge for those oppressed with many cares, and a shadow of a great rock in a weary land, the Church should carry healing by its very presence in the world. The world turns wistfully to the Church, and it does crave for the true rest which is in Christ. It seeks an escape from its own bustle and tumult, from that arena in which all men strive and many fall, in which the fury of competition drives them on until perhaps they sink exhausted and beaten in the race. Often the world turns to the Church as to a sanctuary when it has been thrown down by life itself, and too often it finds in the Church precisely what it found in the world, the same bustle, the same commercial methods, the same strife, sectarian rivalries, an atmosphere from which the spiritual has lifted its quiet wings and flown away. We have sometimes forgotten that there are mystical chords in human nature which must be touched not in secular tumult but in calm. To drive reverence out of the Church is to lose most of its appeal, for life is beset with mystery at every point. The Church has become the last refuge of silence, and yet how often it fails us even

here. The Church can never be converted into a forum, or into a mart, or into a roaring public meeting, without signing the warrant of its own decay and ultimate extinction. The peace of a home is quite different from that of a cemetery. If the Church is to be as Christ was in the world, it will share in that wonderful and ineffable restfulness which seems in the Gospel narrative to brood over every scene and even over the most critical and stormy hours.

(2) Another marked characteristic of the new time is the awakening of a conscience for social service and of a resolve to secure a better chance for the poor, the weak, and the disinherited. We misread our social struggles if we regard them as merely demands for more pay and less work, for they are rather the result of that breath of idealism which is sweeping over men's thoughts and lives. All over the English-speaking world at least, leaders of others are being moved to consider what they can do to lift the burden of the sorrow and pain of human life. The doctrine of *laissez faire*, the extreme emphasis which was laid upon the rights and liberty of the individual, the calm acceptance even by Christian people and philanthropists of the economic principles and results which accumulated wealth in the hands of a few and sacrificed the many, these things belong to that world which is passing away. It is strange to us that good

men and women, say of the eighteenth century, should have been profoundly unmoved by the social conditions and injustice of their day. As I write, I see hanging upon the wall a famous portrait of William Cowper, the poet so loved and revered by Evangelicals. That calm, beautiful face, it moves me strangely as I look upon it. We read his poems and letters, and we can picture the daily life at Olney. The evening is drawing on. The curtains are drawn. The urn is brought in, grace is said, and either Lady Hesketh or Mrs. Unwin pours out "the cup that cheers but not inebriates"; the poet reads some good book; the day closes with family prayers, and they all retire to rest. The very model of a Christian home of the eighteenth century. But if they had looked out of their windows, it would have been upon an England of brutal sports, of bestial drinking, of the darkened lives of children, in which the common people were untaught and had no chance. There is no sign of a social conscience in the writings of Cowper. It was Shelley, the atheist, not the Evangelical poet, who pleaded passionately for the rights of man. We have little understood the temper of the new age and of the days that are before us if we have not seen that a vast change is coming upon our world, that nothing will be taken for granted and nothing respected in our social, economic and religious institutions

that conflicts with human rights and brotherhood. We cannot return as a nation after the war to the old system of sweated labour, rookeries, insanitary surroundings and the darkening of child life by excessive labour. We want to see a better world, a brighter world, a world in which there shall not be the old glaring inequalities. In the heart of every right-thinking man there is something that responds to this note of hope. Such a cause will not lack recruits. The sacrifice and agony of the world will not have been in vain if, thereby, it casts aside evils and wrongs and there is the emergence of a worthier future.

(3) The only other outstanding fact with which I shall deal at this point, as deeply concerning the Church, is the new place of woman in the social order. In the mediæval period she had great public power and authority in the religious orders. We must confess, however, that she has had but little help from the Church of our day in gaining her altered position. Yet it would be a profound mistake to suppose that the cause has owed little to Christianity. At the very heart of our religion lie ideas and forces which, though often obscured and slumbering, have protected woman and emancipated her. In Christ Jesus there is and can be no distinction. The whole place of woman in our western civilization is due to the nobler conceptions which the Gospel

has brought in its train. The question now, however, has been taken out of the merely speculative and academic. With an amazing swiftness, the position has changed. Political power has been given to six million women voters. Many doors which are at present closed against women will certainly be thrown open. I regard the liberation of woman from the bonds of prejudice, the growth of the power to serve at the call of new responsibilities, and the gift of her intellect, intuition and moral earnestness as the most hopeful features of our time. Only at its peril can the Church make itself the last ditch of prejudice in this respect or forget that its problems will be best solved by men and women working together.

I do not propose to discuss the exact ecclesiastical functions or positions which women may claim in coming days. No door in the State will be permanently closed to them. The learned professions are opening to them one by one, though it may be reluctantly. They will be in Parliament, and there is no reason to doubt that sooner or later they will be in the Government. Go where you will to-day, you find them cool and clever administrators, organizing armies of women workers or raising large funds. It has been my business to interview some of them, and I have been impressed by the air of quiet confidence and mastery of detail. I have seen them sur-

rounded by masses of correspondence, with duties and calls thronging upon them from every side. But they are not flurried, and they speak with that aspect of leisure to attend to the thing in hand which is always the mark of a capable administrator. Does any one think that women of this order can be permanently excluded from the highest service of the Church? The danger is lest they should lose patience with the Church as an institution and live their lives elsewhere. It is distressing to attend gatherings of women leaders and workers in the social, educational and political spheres, and to find that many have already done so. Of course, no one by a stroke of the pen can efface the differences between men and women. I do not contend that they can take precisely the same place or render the same service. At any rate, in the new world, women will enter upon hitherto untried paths, they will assume added responsibilities and will advance in power, efficiency and self-confidence; prejudices will disappear and the Church will be compelled to accept the principle that sex in itself can be no bar to position and service.

So far, I have indicated three of the special problems which press upon the modern Church. They are by no means the only ones, but they are selected because they stand out before every thinking man and woman. The Church cannot confront them

effectively in its present divided condition, and so long as it appears to place the chief emphasis upon things that do not matter. Though it is a supernatural institution, it must be sensitive to the atmosphere of the world in which it is placed, and, above all, it must not affront the mind and conscience of the present generation by methods and policies which are small, narrow and unchristian. Our modern world will not even listen to a divided Church. The Church, however, is a living organism, and not a stiff and dead machine incapable of responding to the changes which occur in the passage of time. It must prove that it is possessed by the living Spirit of its divine Founder. New light will come to it in each generation, for, it has been well said, "has any one ever exhausted a single word of Jesus?" In the midst of all the multitudinous voices which surge around it, if it has insight and vision, it will be equal to the demands of each successive age. No one can forecast the future or the birth of time. Other problems and new situations will arise in a living humanity: new forms will be devised to replace those which have become outworn; truths which have been partly obscured or misunderstood will shine with a new significance. We have come upon a time of catastrophe and upheaval, and the most splendid renewals of human society have arisen through catastrophe and upheaval. Let the

Church, as it faces the new age, say with
Paracelsus—

“ If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press 'God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.”

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW WORLD

I

“ There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Church does not count for so much in our own land to-day as it once did. Rivals have sprung up on every side to dispute its authority. A general weakening of faith and conviction has acted as a solvent upon its influence, and powers which it formerly exercised, and which did not properly belong to it, have passed elsewhere. Time was when the Church regulated every man's external life from the cradle to the grave. It prescribed an unceasing round of payments, penances, pilgrimages and performances. It interrupted the work of the world by a succession of saints' days. Its clergy claimed and enforced a haughty exemption from any lay tribunal, no matter how heinous

or clamant the offence, but they themselves interfered in every part of the domestic and social order. Western Europe lay under the fear of hell and of the wrath to come. The lawless excesses of robber barons were held in check. Kings flagellated themselves at the bidding of a priest. It is true that whenever the veil is lifted from that mediæval England, as in the *Canterbury Tales*, we find a world little affected in the moral realm. Yet, though the people laughed at jests and scandals about monks and friars, they observed the rules of the Church in that which was formal and external. In its own way the Church counted for a great deal in that bygone time.

We come upon a period of a very different character in the later years of Elizabeth and under James I, but it is like in this respect, that still the Church counts for a great deal. The figures which appear in the swaying, seething conflict bear new but significant names, Papist, Puritan, Presbyterian, Anabaptist and Brownist. Theological controversies agitated the minds of men. Weighty volumes, pamphlets, biting tractates, often written in prison, printed in Holland or in secret presses at home, many of them indescribably dull to us, in vile type and on worse paper, poured from the rival parties in a bewildering abundance and swift succession. A religious pamphlet was often an event. *Reformation without tarying for Anie* was

the signal for a new era. The battle raged between bishops and schismatics. Magistrates became expert theologians. Even the Lord Treasurer had to take a hand in judging the theory of Independency. Separatists were driven into exile or hanged at Tyburn for a heretical opinion. England rang with laughter at the *Mar-prelate* Tracts. "It is not to be supposed that men were more intent then upon the unseen and eternal, but life itself, security, conduct, property, wars and foreign alliances turned on the mysteries of religion and the articles of a creed." Those days will never return any more than the days of Wyclif. The Church is no longer in the centre of the stage. Preaching and praying do not count for so much to the statesman when he reckons up the forces with or against his policy. The discussion of a sacrament or of a form of Church polity will never again be a national event of the first magnitude. The Church is not so much beset as disregarded.

Yet there must be a place for the Church in the new world, though not in the precise form in which it presents itself to-day, for the Church has forgotten some of the original conceptions and ideals that called it into being. The proposal to retain Christianity but to abandon the Church as a useless and discredited institution is purely chimerical. Spirit must, in this world, be linked to substance; truth to form, and witness to organ-

ization. The Church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. It would be perilous to the last degree to enter upon the new age without that Body of Christ which incarnates and expresses the divine ideals and forces of the race, and alone lifts man above the limitations of time and space; and all the more perilous since man has at last discovered and applied secrets of nature which, unless controlled by Christian ideas, may work his own ruin. A scientific writer has speculated that a prehistoric race came upon the secret of radium and, in experimenting with terrific and un-understood forces, blew the planet into fragments. A modern civilization, without the Christian faith, has within itself equally terrific forces, for its own ruin and sorrow, and would wander through infinite space like a lost soul. The need for the moral leadership of the Church is not likely to be lessened as the world, in its age-long pilgrimage, is disillusioned as to many of its teachers. Any remedy for its ills that leaves God out of account carries the fatal germ of decay at its very heart. But the Church as an institution must justify itself. It is challenged from every quarter. Some of our most widely read and, it must be confessed, brilliant novelists proceed upon the assumption that the ethics and institutions of Christianity are obsolete. Robert Hall once wrote of a novelist of his day, "In point of tendency I should class her books among the

most irreligious I ever read. She does not attack religion, or inveigh against it, but makes it appear unnecessary by exhibiting perfect virtue without it." To-day it is not "perfect virtue" which is exhibited, but the flat and flagrant repudiation of the moral standards of which the Church is the trustee.

It is vital for the Church to make its own distinctive contribution. It must stand apart and in a certain measure of detachment. It is not one among many, so that if it fails its place can be taken by another. Every society has its own *raison d'être* and calling. Here reaching down through the centuries is the Society of Jesus, the Body of Christ, called to be in the world as He was in the world. If it is content to be secular, to strive after the same ends as merely human organizations, the purpose, the spirit, the special function, for which it came to be, will be absent from human history. I am not thinking now of what the Church is able to do for its living members, or of how it intensifies the faith, worship and fellowship of those to whom its communion is a reality. I am concerned to ask, what is the part which it has to play and how can it justify itself in the new world?

I. As I reflect upon the matter, it seems to me that the supreme function of the Church is to know God, and to make its idea of God operative in human lives. That it serves other ends and renders other services is true,

but they are secondary and, apart from the supreme end, they tend to become valueless and the Church itself to become dead. It is a historical fact that a Church cannot surrender its central revelation of God without becoming a mere shadow and a name, while on the other hand it may in the course of time be loaded with superstitions and accretions, yet if it keeps the faith, it retains the power to nourish sainthood and to renew its strength for great enterprises. For example, to serve the cause of freedom is one of the real ends of the Church, but without the faith it is an empty achievement. "The years pass," says a writer, "the struggle is over, freedom is won, and what does freedom bring us to? It brings us face to face with atheism and science; the faith in God and Immortality (which we have seen struggling to clear from superstition) suddenly seems to be in the air." The Church must enshrine the revelation of God of which it is the trustee. It must give substance, content and meaning to the vague beliefs and aspirations of which most men are conscious. Napoleon said, "I am neither an atheist nor a rationalist; I believe in God and am of the religion of my father." The average man does not deny the existence of God. In the eighteenth century when deism was most in vogue, the writings of the deists, Toland and Tindal, were read by a learned few, and they can be found in musty libraries

to-day, but it is said that for many years fifty thousand copies of Isaac Watts's hymns were sold annually, and multitudes still unite to sing "O God, our help in ages past." The Church would not be worth preserving if it ceased to be mystical, or if it did not come to the world through the gates of vision and communion. The only Church which makes a convincing appeal to our own or any age is that which feels itself to be at one with the deathless voices and the timeless spirits like Thomas à Kempis and John Bunyan. The literature of the Church expresses a mystical hunger and thirst which are ineradicable from human nature. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

It is not my business to set forth a system or even an outline of theology. I may, however, express the conviction that the compact statement of the nascent religion which Mr. H. G. Wells, as scribe to the spirit of his generation, has made in *God the Invisible King* is quite inadequate to sustain anything that can be called a Church. At the close of his inquiry, this is the utmost concession he can make to the Church idea: "They want to shout out about God. They want to share this great thing with all mankind. Why should they not shout and share? Let them shout chorally if they are so disposed." The

reason is plain. The Church is a divine creation, and it came into being through the Word. A Gospel of redeeming grace is implied in every message, act and sacrament of the Church. We may be thankful for the measure of light which has come to Mr. Wells, and may be charmed to see him stepping out into a new world like a child, fascinated by his new discoveries. Yet his theology has no validity. It rests entirely upon his own experience and its weakness is that he has invented it. To him the likeness of God is courage, youth, love. The God of the universe, God the Father Almighty, is a veiled Being. The God whom he knows is finite, provincial, the King of Mankind. Such a speculation has no impelling or binding force. The God to whom the Church bears witness is revealed in Jesus Christ. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. The nature of His being baffles our intellect, and the terms in which we speak of Him are only figures which seek to express the inexpressible. But the Church, by its history, its worship and its message, tells men of a God Who overrules our human affairs, Who meets us in the way, Who sustains us in weakness and sorrow, Who heals and cleanses and pardons, from Whom we can never escape because He will not let us go or give us up, to Whom every one of us is ultimately and finally accountable. The revelation of God, however, is not a thought

only; it is an act, or rather a succession of acts. The Church cannot maintain itself on anything less actual than the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. The relation of God to a world in which sin is an awful reality can never be adequately expressed by genial and tolerant kindliness. The divine love must be holy, searching, judging, burning. In this sense the Church must know God, with depths of humility and penitence, it must know Him for itself, not by tradition or in a creed, but with a vital, penetrating knowledge which dominates its worship, thought and activity, if it is to make its distinctive impression upon the world.

II. The true objective of the Church is to establish the Kingdom of God in the world. Our Lord founded His Church, and it was to be the instrument of the Kingdom which He had already announced. Can the Church accomplish this supreme and world-wide task and find "a vital fund of spiritual creative energy for the immense new needs of the years which lie before it"?

Certain conditions must be fulfilled, and these are so profound and exacting as to amount to nothing less than a rebirth of the Christian Church. No one can for a moment think that the Church, as we know it, is sufficient for the task. The idealism of the early years when it was bathed in courage and hope, and stood as it were on the tiptoe of

expectation to hail a new heaven and a new earth, must be renewed. Above all, it must not lower its demands or weaken its claims, for it cannot save the world by compromise.

The Church must witness to the primary Christian virtues in the greatest way. At the beginning of its history it presented a striking contrast to the ethics of the Pagan world in which it was placed. Paganism, whether in Greece or Rome, worshipped beauty or power. Art and empire without the moral and spiritual elements which are as the salt of human life tend to become decadent and corrupt. The natural instincts of man were to be followed even if they involved loss, pain or ruin for others. Slavery was an unquestioned part of the social system, for there were no rights of man as man, and freedom was the prize of those who could win it or keep it by the sword. To get as many of the good things of the world for yourself as you possibly could, to seize the golden hours as they passed, and to extract from them as much sweetness and pleasure as they could yield, in one word, to do the best you could for yourself, that was the general scheme of life in the ancient world. To exercise restraint on the ground of certain abstract moral distinctions between one form of pleasure and another was counted absurd. Juvenal, it is true, held up the life of the wealthy sensualist to bitter scorn, but that

was chiefly because it was disgusting and because outraged nature revenged itself. I am not unmindful of the ethical teaching of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius and other Stoic philosophers. Yet the fact remains that the Christian ethic shone in this Pagan world like a star in a dark sky. The Christian virtues of purity, mercy, humility and service were simply not part of the furniture of the Pagan mind. The writings of the early Church presented a set of virtues in marked contrast to Pagan ethics, such as to be poor in spirit, meek, merciful, peaceful. They praised conduct which was commonly regarded as servile or fantastic. They exalted and exemplified poverty and chastity. The fruits of the Spirit, said St. Paul, were love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Under the impulse of the new teaching and enthusiasm, multitudes accepted the Christian virtues as the rule of life and trod the way of the Cross, finding in it their joy and reward. How mighty was the contrast, how infinite the gulf which separated the ideals of the Christian and the Roman world.

It is a long time ago; undoubtedly the ideals have been lowered, and the Church has compromised on Christianity. Moreover, there is a philosophic revolt against the Christian virtues. To-day we see the recrudescence of Paganism. The Christian ethic is denied. Pagan virtues are opposed

to Christian virtues, dignity to resignation, self-respect to humility, stoical forbearance or contempt to true forgiveness, valour and ruthless energy to the passive virtues of gentleness and love. The philosophical movement from Kant to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Treitschke has at length taken shape in action and in a settled policy. The "will to good" has given place to the "will to power." The invasion of Belgium and France by Germany and its entire disregard of international and humane laws are simply the translation into deeds of the philosophic revolt against the Christian code of ethics and of the persistent teaching that Christian morality is a drag on the wheels, and that respect for Christian duty is incompatible with national advancement. Such aggression and ruthlessness would not have shocked the conscience of any people before Christ came, but they cannot anyhow be squared with Christianity. But we must not plume ourselves upon our loyalty and obedience to the teaching of Jesus Christ. The essential principles of Paganism run through our own national life and are seen in reckless extravagance, hardness of heart and indifference to the struggles and sufferings of the poor. The Church must watch itself lest the world should invade it, that world which is enmity against God. Let it read the Gospels frankly to discover the life which in the thought of Christ was best and most pleasing

to God, and it is not likely to boast itself about anything.

Can there be a rebirth of the Church? The insistence has been far too much upon orthodoxy of creed. Opinions and creeds have their rightful place, but the emphasis of Christ's teaching was upon love and forgiveness and mercy. There is one great word of His which has never been understood or explored, but it casts a great illumination into the depths of His thought. He set a child in the midst as the pattern and example for the disciples. The note, therefore, of Christian virtue is simplicity. The Church, if it is to have a distinctive morality, must get back to simplicity, it must hate display and self-seeking, and exemplify the spirit of brotherhood. That is to say, its members must be as Christ was, without pomp or pretension, but lowly and forgiving. There can be no real reformation until it takes much more seriously the example of that simple and unworldly Figure which once passed along the ways of Judea and Galilee.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW WORLD

II

“ For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.”

A. H. CLOUGH.

IN the previous chapter I have urged that the Church must justify itself in the new world by its intimate knowledge of God, and, further, that it must serve men and bring in the Kingdom of God. I have pointed out that its place in the world must be distinctive and that it must do its work not by compromise, but by witnessing to the primary Christian virtues in the greatest way. I now desire to carry on the discussion to a further stage.

(1) The place of the Church in the new world will depend on the strength and passion of the conviction at its heart. Every

great movement begins with a positive idea enshrined in a burning soul. It is carried forward by a prophet who is ready to risk something, everything for it. He gathers others around him who are like-minded with himself. A conviction has taken possession of their minds, and they are hurried along by a passionate desire to share it with others. They are scarcely conscious of sacrifice, or, if they are, they rejoice in it. The question always is, how long can a movement retain its initial spiritual energy, since as time passes every centre of light and heat tends like a burning sun to grow cold and to become a shell? Thus Christianity itself began. "For I think," wrote St. Paul, "that God had set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death, for we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men." Ignatius Loyola found the Roman Church discredited and weakened by revolt, but in a single generation he more than won back its lost territories. The Jesuit missionaries faced exile, hardship, and even torture with a smile, and they conquered a new world by their faith. A Church with the pedestrian note, a comfortable Church, respectable and self-satisfied, will not impress any one or achieve anything, for it is only a worldly institution. It must be ready to risk something. It cannot appeal to a time which has risked everything in the storm of war unless itself is heroic, going out

on great adventures, attempting impossible tasks, and facing difficult enterprises. The world cannot be overcome by money, or machinery, or vast organization, but by faith. The moral and spiritual elements in the Church are its true resources. The story of Abraham is the story of all time. The religious leader must leave his idols behind and go forth into a land that God will show him. The measure of sacrifice will always be the measure of victory. If the Church is ready to venture everything upon God, not to fear anything that may be demanded, it may count again for a great deal. I have sometimes felt that if the Church could go forth as once it went, without purse or scrip or staff, if it could go stripped of everything false and earthly as the sinner does when he makes the great surrender, if it could cast off all these accretions that it has gathered and accumulated through the centuries, if it could face the world with but a Cross in which it really believed, and in the power of the great commission, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you : Receive ye the Holy Ghost," the most glorious hours in its history might be repeated.

(2) The Church must understand the attitude and temper of its own time, looking through its eyes, speaking its vocabulary, wearing its garb. We are all together part of a modern world, sharing laws and conditions which affect our intellectual and spiritual values and judgments. There is

always a current mental attitude with which we must reckon. There is a gate that lies open in our day, and it is no use coming to an entrance that has been long closed or lies in ruins. The gospel in its essence remains the same, but the human statement, or presentation, or emphasis, will change from one age to another. No human statement can ever be final. Like radium, it may shrivel up and destroy some tissues of disease, but, unlike radium, it will not burn on into another age with undiminished energy. The truth of Athanasius, of the Mendicant Friars, of the German Reformation, of the Evangelical Revival, and of the Oxford Movement, each was effective for its own day. What we find so hard to realize is that, in order to move men, truth requires certain conditions in the human mind. The temper of our own time has certain marked characteristics. It is scientific. It makes experiments and it examines a great number of instances. Its inductions rest upon verified facts, and it has a certain distrust of *a priori* reasoning. Moreover, it has come under the influence of critical methods and it does not read the Bible in quite the same light as formerly. It claims that the Bible has become more real and precious when its history and teachings are set in the light of their own age. Yet again, the modern mind is undoubtedly impressed with the vastness of that heathen and

Mohammedan world which rises up against Christianity, and which seems to grow more rapidly than does Christianity itself. These are among the conditions in which the Church finds itself, and if it ignore them, it will beat the air and plough the sand. If it is obscurantist or fails to address itself to the thoughts and difficulties which are in men's minds it will be beside the mark, and its controversies will seem academic and professional. It is simply disastrous when men, wrapped in grave-clothes of dead controversies, utter battle cries which have lost all their power. "What conclusion they may reach," a theologian has said, "is unimportant; the only thing of real importance is that they should come to an end." There must be no break between the Christian interpretation of the world and the intellect of the age in which we live. The assumption of our time is that "there is no department of human thought or action which can claim to be exempt from the scrutiny of the human reason." And although reason cannot explain all the mysteries of existence and there is a realm of truth which springs from revelation and is not of our finding out, yet the re-statements of its faith by the Church must not be in collision with the rational, scientific and social principles upon which the progress and hope of our world are based.

(3) I wish to make it plain that the Church

will not count for much in our time unless it can take its part in solving the ills of society. If we are to get back to Christ, we must begin where He did: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." He lifted men's eyes up to the Father in heaven; He spoke of prayer and sin and the remission of sins, and a great deal about final judgment. But it was impossible for Him to be in the world of His day without healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and taking the part of the poor against the oppressor and extortioner. Just as a tree must rise into the upper air and be bathed in the light that streams from above, and yet must be rooted in the earth and in the common soil, so the Church must be planted firmly in the environment of the common, everyday world. The Reformation swept away many abuses in the Church, but it is said that the lot of the poor was much easier and better before the Reformation than it has been since. The very spirit of individualism which has been the mainspring of our enormous growth in wealth and commercial power has pressed hardly on the poor.

It is extremely difficult to define the relation of the Church to social and political reform. Indeed, it cannot be set down in

exact terms. The moment we pass beyond vague generalities of the most non-committal character we are involved in a mass of half-truths and confused statements. On the one hand it is said, "The Church has nothing to do with politics," and on the other, "You cannot separate politics and religion," and both these assertions are untrue.

Let us frankly admit that the Church is charged with a message which is other-worldly. Whatever interpretation we may put upon the apocalyptic imagery of Jesus, it is clear that He moved freely in the realm of transcendental forces and ideas, and that sin, grace and eternal life were central to His teaching. The Church cannot, therefore, simply moralize its gospel or content itself with a shallow philosophy which finds satisfaction within the bounds of time. The eternal significance of human life, of each human life, is the chief concern of the Church. It makes the tremendous claim that it has a solution of the mystery of human existence and that it finds it outside the present order of things. It must never let this go and accept in lieu thereof something which after all can be only a second best. In one of his novels, Dostoievsky turns away from the course of the story to plunge into a weird and terrible discussion of the problem of human suffering, cruelty, and especially of the heartrending tortures inflicted upon innocent children. No

amount of human progress can wipe out these agonies or shed one ray of light upon the enigma, and the Church must cling to its answer in the unseen to those who have missed everything in the seen. If all the dreams of all the social reformers were realized, life for vast multitudes would still be a failure, and for every one the point is reached where it fails finally unless there is a gospel of the beyond.

But the example of our Lord is before us. While He came out of the unseen and while the whole secret of His being was unbroken communion with the Father, yet His ministry to the poor, the sick and the hungry was very definite and personal. He laid down principles of human conduct which were profound and far-reaching. The meaning of the Incarnation is that the religion of Jesus touches life at every point. There is no inconsistency between the celestial splendours out of which He came and the manger in which He was born. The new time will require the Church to take its place more definitely in the application of Christ's teaching to secular society, without pretence or evasion. The Church must give leadership and speak with boldness concerning social wrongs and evils, and the world is always ready to listen to real men speaking real words about real things. Mere vague general statements will not suffice. The Church of the Mediæval period lost its

great place because it failed to make a bridge between Feudalism and the common man. Hence arose some of the lawless movements which swept across Western Europe in defiance of the Church. The questions with which the conscience of the new world will concern itself will relate to the acquisition and use of wealth, the traffic in intoxicating drink, the crowding together amid insanitary surroundings of great masses of the people, the settlement of international disputes. The world will be increasingly impatient and disdainful of a Church which has nothing to say about these things, but continues to discuss orthodoxy, Church government, forms and ceremonies. It would, indeed, be like the Synod of the Russian bishops in Moscow, calmly discussing the mode of episcopal election in the time of Chrysostom, while the Bolsheviki were carrying red ruin through the land.

The Church must make the Christian contribution to social reform. It must send forth into public life men and women whom it has instructed and inspired to be servants of the people, who have the mind of Christ, and who desire to serve their generation. The contribution of the Church as a Church⁷ will not be by way of programme or by linking itself to any party in the State, but by infusing the spirit of Christ into human affairs, by insisting that there are no rights¹ without correlative duties, and that the

accumulation of wealth without any care as to how it is obtained and for merely selfish use and ease, is a sin against God and man.

(4) The Church must transcend Nationalism. And there is nothing in this which is inconsistent with a true and Christian patriotism. Not in any one section, but as a whole it must apply the principles of Christ to international relationships. Its distinctive contribution is not limited to the individual or to society. The most conspicuous failure of the Church has been that it has so seldom, if ever, restrained national ambitions and has so often encouraged and inflamed them. Through a large part of its history, it did claim to speak as the authentic voice of God and as His vicegerent on earth, but its policy was for the most part quite indistinguishable from that of worldly governments. In this direction almost the first real beginnings have to be made and the structure has to be built up practically from the foundation. Indeed, the current political philosophy of Germany claims that the State is exempt from the moral teaching of Jesus, and that Christianity can only apply to the individual, and it denies that Christian morality can have any relevance to the State. Bernhardt expressly declares, "Christian morality is based, indeed, on the law of love. 'Love God above all things and thy neighbour as thyself.' This law can claim no significance for the relation

of one country to another, since its application to politics would lead to a conflict of duties. . . . Christian morality is personal and social and in its nature cannot be political." But the will of God overrules all human affairs, and nations rise or perish as they obey or reject His word.

We live in a world which has had a terrible set-back. So sure were we of ourselves that peace had become a platitude. Our audiences yawned when pious resolutions were moved at our assemblies. It seemed so unreal and incredible that nations should be involved in the waste and agony and in the supreme folly and wickedness of universal war. But Armageddon has arrived. In a moment, the crust of our civilization has broken up and the raging fires have flared up more fiercely than ever before. Of course it will be urged that the Church has not prevented or restrained the present conflict, and that it has ranged itself along national lines in opposing camps. But in the very fact that human nature is unchanged, that national passions and ambitions are so easily roused, and that the most peace-loving peoples may be compelled to fight, we may find an urgent reason for a Church which transcends Nationalism and which in every Christian country will go to the Cross rather than take part in merciless, ambitious and unscrupulous programmes.

This point is so important that I may

deal with it a little further. Pacifism I freely admit is not the absolute and final law of the Church. A situation may arise, indeed it has arisen, when the Church may regard it as the will of Christ to keep nothing back that justice and righteousness may not perish from the earth. It may have to go into Gethsemane, but blood and tears and death will not mean so much to it as to save the soul of the world, for it began with these. Yet I am convinced that to go into the future and to leave the Church behind is not the way to mend matters. True, it will have to be a very different Church from anything the world has ever seen, if it is to prevent or restrain war. It must be a Church in communion in its different parts, for a divided Church cannot speak effectively to a divided world. There is, for example, no united voice of British Christianity. Above all, the Church must rise above national barriers and enter into Catholic visions and aims, which do not seek the welfare of one people at the expense of another, or limit Christian love by geographical bounds. Freedom from all entanglements with governments is the first condition of freedom to obey the will of Christ. We see that Protestantism is not a sufficient guarantee for liberty or righteousness. The hatred and contempt of the Russian masses for the Orthodox Church, as revealed in revolutionary literature, is

significant and alarming. It was inevitable that the Russian Church, which stood for Czarism and kept every breath of freedom out of its councils, should have no influence in guiding the course of the revolution. If the Church is to make the mind of Christ the law of conduct in all human relationships, it must break with the kingdoms and policies of this world and carry the Christian ethic of love, brotherhood, peace and righteousness to the democracies as the motive and end of conduct between man and man. Lord Hugh Cecil has defined Nationalism as "the proposition that we owe a boundless devotion to our own country and nothing whatever to any other country but our own." Using the term in this sense, he says: "Can we ingeminate among mankind this sense of the essential unity between Christian peoples? That is the great task of the future. I should like to see after the war a very resolute effort made by the ministers of Christianity of all denominations and in all countries, to enforce as a commonplace, not only that War is inconsistent with Christianity, but that Nationalism is inconsistent with Christianity. We want to get behind the idea that the highest loyalty we can owe is to our country; we want to feel the full force of the truth that all men are brothers, and that we owe to every one a common debt of inexhaustible and immeasurable love."

(5) Finally, it must be a militant Church. To maintain the spirit and courage of an army it is essential to engage in an offensive and to take the field. Christianity has always been weak and in peril in the periods when it has given itself to metaphysical disputes, barren disputations, wrangles and logomachies. It has renewed its life when it has got back to Christ and drunk of the original springs. The very principle of the Church, as Christ delivered it, was that for it to think only about itself was to lose its soul. It must go out, with ever fresh expansiveness, into all the world. Dr. Forsyth has said that Independency at the close of the eighteenth century would have become "a little clan left with a great relic, a sect living on great memories with little ways," but for the dream of a second world conquest. It is true and always true of the whole Church. It is saved from desuetude by its world idea, nor can we imagine what the Church of our day would be if it had no "foreign legion," but only crouched within its own confines, selfishly seeking to keep its own soul alive.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZED CHRISTIANITY

“ Before I built a wall I’d like to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
Something there is that doesn’t like a wall,
That wants it down.”

ROBERT FROST.

So far, I have spoken not of the churches, but of The Church, and in the deepest sense there is one Church as there is one humanity. The whole company of the redeemed in heaven and on earth constitute the great Church in which all the members are linked to one another because they are united to the Head, Jesus Christ. The characteristic mark of the Church life of our time, however, is that it is split up into denominations. Whatever may be the measure of its essential unity, it presents itself to the world as a number of separate denominations or sects, having their own government, doctrines, funds and buildings, and going their own way without much regard to each other. Christianity is the religion of love and fellowship. Organized Christianity does not strike the world quite in this way.

We have been so accustomed to the

denominational system that it is difficult for us to see it as it is, or to realize what it looks like to the outsider, for it is its better side with which many of us are happily most familiar. It presents itself in our individual experience as something that takes us back to our childhood's days and our early home, linked with venerated pastors and teachers and surrounded with a halo of loyalty, devoted service and self-denial. Nothing is more difficult for any of us than to stand outside our own world and to survey it with new eyes. It is necessary, however, that we try to do this. Let us look at the religious conditions of our time and country with some regard to the aspect they wear to an outsider. We are quite aware of the competitive aspect of modern commerce, the strong becoming stronger, and the weak, weaker; the huge amalgamation with limitless resources trampling on the small trader, simply driving the small concern to extinction and making it impossible for it to exist at all. The Church of Christ is called to exhibit a shining contrast to all this. Yet what do we find? As we set out on our inquiry, let us suppose that it is possible to come to it for the first time and without any previous experience. We have just read the magnificent words, "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one

baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all." We cannot read them without a great glow warming our inmost soul. As we make our way through the streets of town or village, we read the notice boards of the churches. They bear names which require explanation. The churches place that which is divisive and distinctive in the very forefront. Their glory is apparently not in that which unites them to one another, but in that which separates them. The names do not witness to Christ, but to some historical controversy. One suggests a form of Church government, another bears the name of a great religious leader, another claims to be a purer and more original Church order, and another is connected with a sacrament. They have no warmth or magnetic attraction for the outsider, and rather tend to repel him. The most startling discovery is that the disposition and distribution of the resources of the Church are made without the least regard to the effect upon its different parts, so that places of worship are erected next door or opposite or near each other. As we shall see, the policy is carried to its extreme point in rural districts. This is the external aspect, but a little deeper inquiry reveals the fact that some of the churches not only ignore but deny one another's existence, and will hold no communion at all.

I would point out, however, that there is

a tendency to exaggerate the number of the denominations. The situation has been misrepresented. If it were true that "one might almost say innumerable religious bodies have separated themselves from the communion of the English Church," the problem might well be insoluble. It is greatly to be regretted that there has been so little attempt on the part of controversialists to discriminate between historical Nonconformity and the faddists, cranks and eccentric sects of Whitaker's Almanack. The evangelical Free Churches are not legion, as the man in the street is often encouraged to believe. The movement for their federation is for the present carried on in England, and therefore I content myself with discussing the English denominational situation. In Wales it is very much of the same order, and Scotland is mainly Presbyterian. The prevailing forms of organized Christianity in England are as follows : the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the great evangelical Free Churches, Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist and United Methodist. These last are connected with the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, as also are five small denominations numbering all together about forty thousand members. These are the Independent Methodists, the Wesleyan Reform Union, the Moravians, the Countess of Hunt-

ingdon's Connexion and the Disciples of Christ. The Friends do not regard themselves as a Church, but as a Society, and no account of English religious life could omit the extraordinary influence of their teaching and practice upon the whole Church of God. The Unitarians lie outside the range of evangelicalism, and the Salvation Army is an interdenominational organization. The place of the Church of England in the religious life of our time requires separate examination. Let us first of all consider the evangelical Free Church denominations.

It will help us, first of all to examine the origin of the Free Churches in England, what they have stood for, and what contribution they have made to the life of the world. The story is little more than of three hundred years. At first the treasure was in very earthen vessels. The great truth which had flashed upon the pioneers trembled back into the darkness, but it passed into the keeping of greater and wiser men, like John Smyth, that eager and radiant soul, and John Robinson, magnanimous and noble. Later on, Puritanism which had remained in the Church of England came out with Baxter and Howe in the secession or ejection of the two thousand clergy. From that moment the great religious cleavage in England became inevitable. There are blunders of kings and prelates for which a heavy price has to be paid through many

generations. In the providence of God, for good or ill, Nonconformity was launched upon its way. The root and centre of it, however, is separation, division which too easily becomes divisiveness. It is the going forth from the old home and the shattering of the old fellowship. You cannot stop division just when you have had enough. Wesley, contrary to his intention, brought into being a communion separate from the English Church. Since then there have been Methodist secessions, and so our world has come to be what it is, not hundreds of sects which the student of Whitaker sometimes conceives evangelical Nonconformity to be, but six powerful Churches which have taken their full share in the making of modern England. These again fall into two main groups as they conform to a congregational or connexional type of Church government.

Let me present at this point a tabular statement of the numerical strength of the six great Free Church denominations. We must bear in mind that the problem has been enormously extended by its passage into the great world. In the British Empire, in the United States of America, in India and Africa, on the continent of Europe, the Christian Church has taken the same sectarian form, though not always in quite the same grouping, or at the same stage of development.

DENOMINATIONAL STATISTICS

MEMBERSHIP

Denomination.	England.	United Kingdom	United States.	The World.
Baptist	260,641	408,029	7,236,650	8,097,588
Congregationalist	288,784	489,616	795,793	1,563,834
Presbyterian	86,525	1,616,113	2,257,439	6,590,000
Wesleyan Methodist	419,534	519,291	(Methodist)	9,797,474
Primitive Methodist	194,386	200,401		
United Methodist	136,288	140,210		

I propose to offer, very briefly, some account of the Free Churches of England with which we are chiefly concerned. I am conscious that it is a delicate and difficult task. The Presbyterian Church of England was constituted in 1876, but a great deal of civil and religious history lay behind and explained this new beginning. Presbyterianism as a form of Church polity and doctrine owed its origin to the intellectual and spiritual authority of John Calvin. The city of Geneva gave him, on the large scale, a free sphere for the working out of his ecclesiastical ideas. The very heart and centre of his teaching was the principle of ecclesiastical authority. This was a power granted "through the Mediator Jesus Christ unto His Kirk gathered." He asserted this principle at a time when it was deeply discredited, partly through Papal abuses and

partly through the course taken by the German Reformation in which Luther had definitely committed his cause to the protection of the princes. Calvin impressed his doctrine upon his disciple John Knox, then an exile in Geneva. The Scottish Reformer carried it to his native land and preached it to the Scottish people with an almost fanatical fervour. His mantle descended upon the most gifted of his successors, Andrew Melville, who also had been in Geneva. Four years after the Armada was destroyed, the Scottish General Assembly entered into the National Covenant and Presbyterianism became the Established Church of Scotland. But the attempt to extend it across the Border and into the very heart of the Church of England did not meet with success. Most of the Presbyterian congregations which remained in England in the eighteenth century became Arian or Socinian. The early exponents would have maintained that there was an identity between their form of Church government and the model of the New Testament. Their successors would scarcely claim so much. Perhaps they would say "in conformity with" rather than "identical with," but the essence of Presbyterianism is that it begins with the Church. The Church is the seat of authority. The validity of the ministry and sacraments is derived from the Church. A minister only becomes such

when he is called by a congregation. I confess to a strong mental impression when I unite in the worship of the Kirk. The centuries seem to vanish and in the austere Geneva gown and the Scottish psalms I am linked with the past. The psalms, pathetic and triumphant voices from pilgrim souls, seem to me to produce the same effect upon the mind as Gothic stones or mediæval windows in the English church.

The first Independent Church in England was formed in 1581, in a room of the Old Men's Hospital in Norwich, under the shadow of the cathedral and the bishop's palace, by Robert Browne, who, like so many of the Separatist leaders, was a Cambridge man, of Corpus Christi. The grim spectre of persecution and exile hung darkly above that little company, yet the hour was fraught with big destinies for the world, for it was the reassertion of the rights of the people of God. Before this date there had been, in the reign of Mary and Elizabeth, groups of Separatists linked together by Protestantism, or by the refusal of a form of worship, but these were only anticipations of the doctrine which Robert Browne formulated. The uniformity of the sixteenth century was much more rigid than that of Mediævalism, and to it the Independents offered a steady and determined resistance. Its religious and political convictions were united in Oliver Cromwell, an imperishable

name. Its conception of the Church has been one of the formative ideas of the modern world. To-day it has assumed the title Congregationalism, which is in itself a hint that the early and rigid Independency has been modified. But amid all changes the central idea survives, the separation of the unworthy, that each congregation is a voluntary and spiritual union in which Christ is present, and that no church or union of churches has any right to interfere with the faith or discipline of any other church. When we desire to describe it we turn instinctively to Dr. Dale. "The Church is a society, larger or smaller, consisting of those who have received the Divine life. When they are gathered together in His name, whether they are but two or three or whether they are a thousand, Christ Himself is in the midst of them—one of the company." A Congregational Church, therefore, is not democratic, but theocratic. It is a company of believers self-governing, under the authority of Christ.

The modern Baptists begin with a little company of exiles who broke away in 1609 from the Independent Church in Amsterdam. Of their leaders, John Smyth, formerly of Christ's College, Cambridge, Bishop Creighton has said that "none of the English Separatists had a finer mind or a more beautiful soul." The first Baptist Church on English soil was formed in 1611 in Newgate Street, London.

At the beginning, while rejecting the baptism of infants, the Baptists did not practise immersion, and only became immersionists in 1642. The two streams of Baptist Churches, the Arminian and Calvinistic, flowed side by side till 1891, when they became one denomination. The modern English Baptists must not be confused with some who share with them, as did the Continental Anabaptists, the rejection of infant baptism, but have little or nothing in common with their spirit, their teaching or their outlook. To the Baptists, the rights of the particular congregation are secondary to the purity of the Church. To them freedom is of value as the atmosphere and condition in which the Church can guard its regenerate life. They represent tendencies and movements of the Church in every age for a severer discipline, and they regard themselves as of the spiritual lineage of the Apostolic Church. Like the Independents, their power has been in preaching, not in organization, and in Spurgeon they expressed all that they have most passionately insisted upon. The Baptist Church rests upon idealism, and it shares this with the Congregationalist. It is aware that it can never be realized on earth, but it is a vision, an ideal of the Divine society.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was at first a Society. The year before he died, John Wesley wrote, "the Methodists in

general are members of the Church of England. They hold her doctrines, attend her services and partake of her sacraments." More than a generation elapsed after he had passed away before the Society definitely separated from the Church of England and became an independent and fully organized Church. John Wesley himself travelled through the length and breadth of the land preaching scriptural holiness and bringing the careless and disobedient to Christ. He formed Methodist Societies. There was no room for evangelical fervour in the Church of England. He was, however, not only a preacher and a saint, but also one of the great statesmen of the universal Church. In the system which he created we see the power and value of organization when united with fervour and a prophetic message. The direct aim of Wesleyan Methodism is to bring every member to have a part in its organization. Yet it is not so much a system as a gospel and a propaganda. It has fire at its heart and fire in its life. The influence of its origin is still powerful within its breast, and it maintains close and affectionate ties with its mother Church.

From time to time there have been secessions from Wesleyan Methodism. The two largest and most powerful in our English religious life to-day are the Primitive Methodist and the United Methodist Churches. They differ little in any respect.

It is said that a Primitive Methodist officer in France was asked to explain the difference, but he replied that, though he had understood it when he left England, he had now forgotten what it was. The separation from the Wesleyans has chiefly to do with the Pastoral Session, with the powers and functions of the minister, and especially of the Superintendent, and also with the authority of the laity in the Church. The first Primitive Methodist Conference was held in 1820. The denomination arose through the tireless labours and sacrifices of flaming evangelists, travelling preachers, who faced every danger and hardship with joy that they might preach the gospel to the poor. The United Methodist Church was constituted in 1907 by the union of the Methodist New Connexion, Bible Christians and the United Methodist Free Church. It has seemed to me that the united Church is greater than three times any one of its parts. As I have met its leaders, I have felt that because it was born in unity, its life has been ennobled and sweetened, and that upon this Church there has been poured out the grace of gentle and holy love.

No one can come in contact with Wesleyan Methodism, or with these two daughter Churches, without being quickly conscious of an indefinable and wonderful quality. It has been my lot to listen to many Methodist preachers, to Hugh Price Hughes more fre-

quently than any, and I have been conscious of a warm evangelic note, a strange, inexplicable power which has often stirred my very soul. Nor is this true only of eminent preachers. You may go into some quiet village in Norfolk or Cornwall; you may enter the Methodist chapel expecting little, and suddenly meet with an arresting personality, perhaps a lay preacher, simple and untaught, but with a message, something prophetic, something real.

The vital affirmations of the great evangelical Free Churches which have played such a part in the making of modern England are positive convictions and ideas, and those who hold them cannot be adequately described by negative terms such as Protestant, Dissenter and Nonconformist, and it is a significant sign of the times that these terms are passing into disuse or are only employed for the purpose of momentary convenience.

Still more evident does it become, as we examine these central affirmations, that they have ceased to be the exclusive witness of any one denomination. They have passed into the life and thought of them all. In practice the differences between a connexional and a congregational system tend to be greatly modified. The Wesleyans find a way to keep the same leader and preacher with his congregation long after the three years have gone by. The Baptists have

their General Superintendents and arrange more frequent change of sphere. Both Baptists and Congregationalists draw near to the Presbyterians in their Central and Sustentation Funds. To go deeper still, outwardly the Free Churches present the aspect of division and often of competition, but inwardly they are one. They have a common origin, a common emphasis and a common conviction at their very heart. "The Free Churches of this country," says Dr. Horton, "are one: their origin is the same, their object is the same, and it is a mere illusion which keeps them apart. . . . Dissent has been through the urge or pressure of spiritual life, wakening men to certain vital elements in the religion of Christ which had been lost or obscured in the religion as by law established." Each denomination has repeated the emphasis, though perhaps with a clearer note or a more aggressive tone. Each fresh migration has been a more daring expression of the original truth, but it has been the same instinct, like the plant stretching further to the light, the tide rising higher on the shore. The three main contentions of the Free Churches have been summarized thus: First, that the Church is composed of those who have been born again, and that its membership is not co-extensive with the nation or secured by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation; second, that the internal life of the

Church is a spiritual fellowship, totally different from the secular relation of parishioners; and, thirdly, that the authority of the Church is vested under Christ Himself in the people of God as distinct from government by a clerical or sacerdotal hierarchy. These three positions represent the common ground of the Free Churches, though each section may give a different emphasis, or vary its form of government, or witness to the common truth by a form of baptism.

The essential oneness of the Evangelical Free Churches may be carried a little further. To a greater or lesser extent, they trust the people. They vary in methods and safeguards and in the balance of power between clerical and lay, just as the democracy of England differs from that of America, but they are all convinced that there is no safety outside the government of the people. Forty years ago "France took her soul out of the custody of an emperor and handed it to the people; Germany placed her soul in the hands of an emperor." Through many vicissitudes and tragedies the new France has come to be of sober valour and serious purpose, and Germany has sunk into the night of militarism. And it is the deep and solemn conviction of all the Free Churches that their power and authority are secure in the keeping of the redeemed people, illuminated by the Spirit of God. The separations in doctrine of the Free

Churches are the natural differences of members of the same family. The process of time has softened the emphasis upon the things that divide. The denominations have insensibly drawn nearer together in doctrine and in practice. Each has borne witness to some principle which in its essence has now become the common faith. Each has some element of value which must be safeguarded for the enrichment of the whole. The Free Churches are coming to see that infinitely more important than to maintain lines of separation in doctrine which have been obliterated or weakened, is it to bring together those who share the same conception of the Christian faith in such a way as to win respect from the Christian mind; to preserve the life of the Free Churches from threatening dangers, not as a formal creed, but as a conquering faith; to establish a fellowship which shall be the home of worship and order, of scholarship and fervour, which shall make its appeal not to any one class or stage of culture, but to all who are seeking after God; a Church impressing itself upon the nation, not as a sect, but as a part of the living Body of Christ, making visible the wealth of its learning and goodness and power, not magnifying its divisions, which are the little things, but its common message, which is the great thing, creating a type of character, not as something which separates it from other Churches, but which is

mystical and universal. "The grand passion for a Church truly holy, truly Catholic; a Church which can, if needs be, override its past, . . . a Church thus considered as the present Body and prospective Bride of her Redeemer and Lord; is the passion which should inflame and enlarge our hearts."

CHAPTER V

DENOMINATIONALISM—GAIN AND LOSS

I

“ The Future I may face, now I have proved the Past.”
ROBERT BROWNING.

IN spite of the fact that the denominations have drawn nearer to each other both in faith and order, it may be urged that it by no means follows that the forms they have assumed through successive generations should be broken up. The question cannot be discussed abstractly and *in vacuo*. You cannot put back the clock of history. Each Church has had a historical reason and origin. Each has arisen under the providence of God. Each has developed an organization with roots and ramifications stretching far and deep. It may be regarded as certain that any vast social or religious structure which has come to be and which has powerfully affected the course of human action has been, in a deep and true sense, inevitable. The prevailing types of ecclesiastical union and activity have persisted through many changes, and have proved their vitality. Each is simply a code in which the finite

spirit of man seeks to express his relation to the infinite. Each has gathered to itself, in the lapse of time, memories and hopes, loyalties and associations, a wealth of experience and avenues of service. Let it alone, it is said, for, with the best intention, you may destroy what you cannot replace. Like all the harvests of human toil, it is imperfect, but let it alone, lest in gathering up the tares the wheat also should be rooted up with them.

We must remember, however, that what is good for one age may not be equally effective for another. Victor Hugo said that the monasteries were helpful in the tenth century, tolerable in the thirteenth, and obsolete in the nineteenth. Change is the law of life. Nothing remains the same. All things come and change and pass. Human institutions appear upon the stage of history. They accomplish their purpose, and God "fulfils Himself" by a new order. The deepest thinkers have seen that in this mutability lies the condition of progress.

" I well consider all that ye have sayd,
And find that all things stedfastnesse do hate
And changed be; yet being rightly wayd,
They are not changed from their first estate :
But by their change their being do dilate,
And turning to themselves at length againe,
Do worke their owne perfection so by fate;
Then over them change doth not rule and raigne,
But they raigne over change, and do their state
maintaine."

Let us first of all define what we mean by a denomination. It begins with a separation which may be informal and tentative, as when Wesley formed the Societies, or definite and declaratory, as when Chalmers led the secession from the General Assembly and founded the Free Church of Scotland. A section of a larger Church may break away in a decisive act, or there may be only "a rift within the lute," a tendency, a breach in fellowship, which, unless healed, will widen into a formal division. A denomination begins when a number of adherents set up a corporate Church fellowship on the basis of certain tenets or practices which they regard as sufficiently important to break up one fellowship and to constitute another. The ground of the separation is that the conscience of the adherent does not permit him to be a member of a Church which does not avow a certain tenet, or maintain a certain order, or observe a certain rite. There is no such thing as entire assent and agreement, but at last the point is reached when loyalty to conscience requires separation. In some periods of history and in some minds it is more quickly and lightly reached than in others. The story of division always takes the same course. A name is assumed or given, as in the apostolic days the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. It becomes a flag, a rallying centre round which adherents gather.

Registers, funds, buildings, trusts, literature, all the elaboration of machinery and organization follow in due course, and a denomination, with its constitution, leaders, propaganda and equipment, is launched upon its way.

Now, it has become clear to most people, who think about it at all, that an unsparing and indiscriminate attack upon the divisions between the Churches is as futile as it is unjust. We have seen that they represent tendencies and movements in history, as, for example, the attraction of Puritan zeal and discipline, or a floating dissatisfaction with lukewarmness in religious life, or a longing for the culture of personal religion. In the actual working out of these movements in organized forms there has been the mixture of good and evil. In all human effort there is the balance of gain and loss. The new temper abroad frankly recognizes this. The sub-committee appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and by the English Free Churches Commission to promote the visible unity of the Body of Christ on earth has issued a Second Interim Report. It is signed, among others, by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr. Kennion, the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Gore, and the Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Talbot, and it is very significant that it contains the following reference to the Evangelical Free Churches—

“ We agree to acknowledge that there are a number of Christian Churches not accepting the Episcopal order which have been used by the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightening the world, converting sinners and perfecting saints. They came into being through reaction from grave abuses in the Church at the time of their origin, and were led in response to fresh apprehensions of divine truth to give expression to certain types of Christian experience, aspiration and fellowship, and to secure rights of the Christian people which had been neglected or denied.”

(1) I propose to discuss the gain and loss of the existing ecclesiastical order. Among the gains which have accrued from the separation of the Churches we must reckon that they have served to place a special emphasis upon truths or aspects of truth which had been obscured, forgotten or denied. “ For we know in part and we prophesy in part.” No one of us can gaze upon the pure white light as it streams from the central sun. The prism of the human mind splits the perfect ray into its primary colours. In one age the Church has whispered a truth which in another it has proclaimed. With our imperfect grasp of the divine revelation we may seize some precious pearl with one hand, while at the same moment we may

let slip an equal treasure with the other. Nor must we forget that truths which are of the very substance of the gospel have often been obscured when the guidance of the Church has passed into the hands of unspiritual men and in the periods of deadness, formalism and worldliness. The Church has again and again been saved by despised and persecuted sects. Again and yet again it has owed its very soul to those who could only find the secret of the spiritual life outside its borders, like the Donatists, the Lollards and the Waldensians in their various forms. No one can measure the debt of spiritual religion in every age to pure and separated souls, to scattered little communities and sects who had no help from the Church of their day, but struggled desperately in the darkness to keep a foothold upon the unseen and eternal. This has been the story of the Free Churches. If we turn our minds back to the inner meaning of their separate existence as portrayed in the preceding chapter, we shall see that each has put into relief a vital part of the inheritance of the Catholic Church. The whole Church would have been the poorer if the witness had been missing.

I may illustrate this by the service which English Nonconformity has rendered to the conception of the Church as free from the control of the State. Indeed, freedom is a central and passionate idea of Non-

conformity, freedom in every direction, in worship, ecclesiastical government, theological thought, freedom as the very air it breathes, as an impulse and a spontaneous attitude; it has to be reckoned with in every proposal, for it is inconceivable that so solid a gain and powerful a safeguard could ever be bartered away at any price. But I venture to think that the battle for the freedom of the Church in relation to the State in this country is as good as won. Erastianism is at its lowest point. Owing to the political events connected with the English Reformation and the Restoration, there was, through many generations, a deplorable subserviency in the Established Church. The spiritual ancestry of our Protestantism, however, is rather from Calvin than from Luther. The simple fact is that the Established Church would have been in grave spiritual danger in the absence of a powerful Nonconformity. If a State Church is to be unworldly and not subservient it must resist an atmosphere and a glittering temptation. It always needs the rough voice of the prophet to keep it straight and to give it any fibre at all. That Germany has had no 1662 explains much silence and tacit approval on the part of theologians and preachers. And if we in this country have been saved from revolution, and if our public policy has been in the main a righteous one, and if the Church of England is a great

spiritual force, both nation and Church may thank in no small degree the emphasis, sometimes perhaps the exaggerated emphasis, which the Free Churches have laid upon the doctrine of spiritual freedom.

(2) Closely connected with this is the gain to the whole Church by the practical witness to the devout and unworldly life which has been in the past the mark of the Free Churches. This has been to some extent the result of the pressure of their separations. I am not speaking of the present, but of the past. I know that it is contended that they have now "made terms with every worldly interest and power, business, politics, society, sport and intellectualism." But it is admitted even by those who make this charge that "most of the great sectarian revivals have indeed begun with a conscious and genuine repudiation of these modes of worldliness and a refusal to compromise with them." It is not difficult to explain our spiritual past. The historical factors which account for it have been mainly two—Puritan ideals and Methodist fervour. Running through Dissent as something almost axiomatic, which even to-day works feebly as a blind impulse in the blood or as a restraint, was the idea of the Christian life that it must be personal, regenerate, serious, separated. Memories of the Christian pilgrim pressing along the hard and difficult way to the celestial city clung to the Dis-

senter. He must leave everything behind and get there with prayers and tears and fighting. Then came Methodism with its fiery evangel rejecting all indifferentism and slackness in the heavenly way. The inevitable result of these separations has been a constant pressure to a purer idealism and also a certain freedom from temptation. Nonconformity was always in a backwater of life, though it is not so now. It looked at everything under the glow of enthusiasm and faith. It rested upon spiritual convictions. Now it has begun to rationalize. It was shut out of everything, and what was the use of sacrificing all the prizes of the world unless you could manifest a better type of personal piety? The divisions had to justify themselves not only against the Established Church, but also against each other, for there was always the subconscious idea that the ultimate justification of a separate form of Church life was that it issued in a loftier Christian life. The strength of the Free Churches has always been in their piety. They have had nothing else to offer. In dark and evil days, they have given to the life of their native land godly homes, strong, earnest and devout men, gracious and saintly women. Lift up the veil anywhere and you will find them. A little while ago the records of a small village Church were sent to me, a Church threatened to-day with extinction through the flow of

population. I found one name which arrested me in its story—one godly line which has persisted until this day. The first glimpse is that of a Puritan preacher lying year after year in Northampton Gaol for the Gospel's sake, while Bunyan lay at Bedford. A century later, I find his descendant, a deacon of the Church, dying triumphantly in Christ. Later, I find his widow, at the age of eighty-eight, the typical, sweet, simple old lady of the eighteenth century, writing to her granddaughter, who desired to join the Church: "If you can satisfy yourself that you are willing to be justified by the Redeemer's righteousness, to be sanctified by His Spirit, to be guided by His counsel, then all is well." I hold in my hand the little book she read when as a girl she joined the Church. It is entitled *Acquaintance with God*. We shall never do them justice unless we recognize the idealism of the sects which has shone through all their separations and has, indeed, been an enrichment of the whole Church of God.

(3) It is sometimes claimed that the different forms of Church government and worship make an appeal to different temperaments and types of mind, and that the religious needs of our time would not be met except through varieties of worship and preaching. The distinctions between the Free Churches have, for most of their adherents, passed out of the realm of con-

science into that of temperament, taste and preference. But I submit that, while each Church has its prevailing character, these varieties are found within each denomination. In each denomination, congregations will be found which make their separate appeal to the learned and to the simple, to the restrained and to the emotional, to those who prefer a worship which is evangelistic, free and social, and to those to whom all this is distasteful, but whose spiritual life is helped by reverence, order and beauty. To the end of time these differences will persist, and they must be met. Now to conclude, it has been an obvious gain that the divisions of the Churches, sometimes when they have been most painful, have multiplied the activities and added to the sacrifices of organized Christianity. All the Churches have been propagandist. Whenever men link themselves with any cause they give to it far more of themselves and their means than they would to that for which they felt no personal responsibility. The vast structure of Nonconformity, with its sanctuaries in towns and villages and on the countryside, its immense and far-extended outward life incarnated in institutions of every kind, its voice which has gone out through all the earth—these have been the fruits of intense spiritual conviction and the passion to save men. Of course, lower motives have often been at work, and of these it is enough to

say with the apostle, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of goodwill. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." And as I think of the gains which have come to the Church through separation, I would not that any rude or sacrilegious hand should be laid upon that which centuries of prayer and toil have built up; rather I would say, in the spirit of the Second Interim Report, from which I have already quoted: "What we desire to see is a willing acceptance for the common enrichment of the united Church of the wealth distinctive of each," and that there should be the continuity "of types of Christian thought, life and order, not only of value to themselves, but of value to the Church as a whole."

CHAPTER VI

DENOMINATIONALISM—GAIN AND LOSS

II

“Night is behind me and the day before—
That is enough—all bars I trample o’er.”

VICTOR HUGO.

THERE is a real parallel in many ways between the story of Puritanism and that of Pharisaism. The latter arose in Jewish history after the exile. Two centuries before Christ it was a great and noble system. The Jewish Puritans or Pharisees, as they were called, were separatists from the heathen tendencies and practices which had invaded Israel. Deeply in earnest and fearless in consistent obedience to the law, they drew to themselves the best moral and religious forces of the nation. Even in its deterioration, the system had powerful attractions for a great religious mind like that of Saul of Tarsus. But when Christ came the life had gone out of it. It had become formal and external. It rejected the baptism of John, and then it crucified our Lord. The story of Pharisaism is at least a warning to us that we may be holding to a shell or to a form from which the spirit has departed. I have set out some of the gains

of that method of division which received its chief historic impulse from Puritanism. In my judgment we have reached a stage when the gains do not outweigh the loss. So far as English religious life is concerned, the era of division has spent its force and lost its moral appeal.

(1) To begin with statistics. I have never been disposed to attach an undue importance to numerical losses. If it could be shown that there had been a qualitative advance even at the cost of a heavy quantitative decline, I should be greatly encouraged. No one pretends, however, that the decline in numbers has been the result of a stricter discipline, or that it has been accompanied by an increase of prayer and spirituality. Probably the very reverse of this is nearer the truth. It is not going well with any of the churches. If the remedy could be found in money, it would be provided at once. The machinery of some of the denominations has reached the utmost point of efficiency and completeness. What it has not been able to accomplish there is no reasonable ground for believing that it ever will accomplish. I think that one explanation of these disquieting facts lies in the inherent weakness of division. The following table of statistics is a very serious call to set our house in order, and to arrest a decline which otherwise involves that the denominations must slowly bleed to death:—

COMPARATIVE STATISTICAL TABLE
UNITED KINGDOM

Denomination.	Membership.			S. S. Scholars.		
	1906.	1916.	Decrease.	1906.	1916.	Decrease.
Baptist	434,741	408,029	26,712	590,321	531,295	59,026
Congregational	498,916	489,616	9,300	738,210	633,656	104,554
Presbyterian Church of England	Increased membership of 770			88,609	70,660	17,949
Wesleyan Methodist	568,344	519,291	49,053	1,026,940	896,531	130,409
Primitive Methodist	206,655	200,401	6,254	465,095	423,404	41,691
United Methodist	148,988	140,210	8,778	315,723	270,273	45,450

(2) The existing system of division often imposes an increasing burden and anxiety upon the life of a Church and its minister : it diverts energies from the spiritual to the material : often it converts the Church into a business concern. I cannot believe that our Lord ever meant His Church to be so perpetually occupied with money, or His ministers "to leave the word of God and serve tables." Financial strain must have an important and increasing part to play in this question. The Free Churches have depended upon the voluntary principle, and because they have been animated by strong convictions, they have not depended in vain. Once let the impression grow that sacrifices are demanded for a system which it is not worth while to maintain, and which may be even injurious to religion, and the main-spring of voluntaryism is broken. Moreover, the days are upon us now, they will certainly become darker and heavier, when the waste of the world's wealth in war will require a much more careful use of the financial resources of Christian people. Before long the laity of the Church will have something very drastic to say about the whole question from this point of view.

(3) Denominationalism is losing ground because it makes no appeal to the conscience and intellect of the best elements in the nation outside our churches. Certainly "the man in the street" is indifferent or hostile

to sectarian distinctions and rivalries, but we have to face the fact that leaders of thought and action take up a similar attitude. Indeed, their tone is even a little more contemptuous. I know the terrible gravity of such a statement as this, but its accuracy can hardly be doubted. Nothing could be more ominous than to get out of touch with the living and actual interests of the new world, to be insignificant or in antagonism to its mind, to be profoundly and hopelessly at variance with its most earnest conceptions and ideals. This is, indeed, to leave us the narrow programme of a sect rather than the outlook of a Christianized England and a redeemed world. Puritanism captured the intellect and the conscience of the best and greatest men of its day. What is the real thought about us of our thinkers and teachers? What is the attractiveness of our Church life for the noble and gifted women who are entering the professions and guiding so many of our movements to-day? If any one would know the thought of our time about the denominations in that great world which lies outside all the churches, let him go to the Universities, let him read the 'Varsity magazine or listen to Union debates; let him go to the War Office or to the Officers' Mess, to the Admiralty, the Foreign Office, the Home Office and the great Government departments; or let him talk with captains of industry, or labour leaders, or social

reformers, or literary men. I am not thinking of that world which is bent on amusement, which is materialistic or sceptical. Many of those to whom I refer sprang from our churches, they have drifted apart, but they have not parted company with religion or moral earnestness or a passion for human advance. They long, amid the deepening sorrows and perplexities of existence, for some faith to bridge between the two planes of thought and being. But they are profoundly indifferent or opposed to our ecclesiastical system, which they think moves along an obsolete and mistaken way. It is as certain as anything can be in this world that, unless the churches are prepared to unite upon the most vital issues, they may finally abandon the hope of winning the intellect and soul of the modern world.

The reason is not far to seek. The thinking part of the nation outside the churches has an entirely different conception of things that matter. They see that the real issue of our time is not in the things that divide the churches, but in the war they wage together against the forces of evil. They see that the real conflict is to retain the Cross, the Gospel, the personal God Himself, any of the priceless and sacred treasures which Christianity has brought to the human race. How well I remember walking up and down on a calm Sunday evening by the sea-shore with one who had lost two gallant boys, one

in France and another beneath the burning Eastern sun. As he told me of the awful struggle raging in his soul, how he had prayed and prayed that they might be spared, and then of the wreckage and midnight of faith when both fell, I saw that in this coming time which will have suffered and lost so much and in which so many lights have gone out, the sects as such can do nothing at all. The things they stand for in their divisions may be true and good as far as they go, but they do not matter. They simply and finally do not matter in this tragic hour. If the churches can together keep one steady light burning to guide the tempest-tossed to the haven, then in the name of God let them do it. " 'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls, and matter enough to save one's own." To save the world is a big business. The bigger men get, and the better they get, the more they care about the central things. Mr. Lloyd George has that strange and almost unearthly gift of genius that, under the guise of humour, casts a great light like a sudden flare upon the battle-field. As he drove one day with a friend through North Wales, he said, " The Church to which I belong is torn with a fierce dispute—one part say that it is baptism into the name of the Father, and the other that it is baptism in the name of the Father. I belong to one of these parties. I feel most strongly about it. I would die for it, but I forget which it is."

(4) Further, denominationalism is breaking down because it does not commend itself to the members of the churches themselves or to those who make up the congregation and adherents. This is in itself a fatal blow to the whole policy. A citadel may be invested on every side by innumerable foes, yet if it is of impregnable strength, and if it is sure of itself, it is secure, but if the *moral* of the garrison fails or they question whether resistance is worth while, the cause is lost. General Foch has said that defeat is through the loss of *moral*; it is because the conquered "no longer believe in victory, because they are demoralized, at the end of their moral resistance." "A battle lost," said Joseph de Maistre, "is a battle which the army believes to be lost." This is supremely true in those struggles in which spiritual issues are at stake and spiritual forces engaged. *Athanasius contra mundum* is by no means a forlorn hope. It would matter very little, and indeed it might even be a great incentive, if the churches were fortified by an intense unyielding conviction that the perpetuation of denominational distinctions was worth any cost and that it was a Christian obligation. But the failure is at the heart of the system. The separations stand for a decaying idea. They make less and less appeal to the professed adherents, that is, to the very people upon whom their continuance depends. The plain

fact is that the vast tree of sectarian divisions is rapidly becoming hollow: it is propped up by the iron bands of trust deeds and funds, and by that conservatism which is so beautiful and touching when it confines itself to "ivy-mantled towers" and "moping owls." One day, in a general storm, the hollow tree will come down with a crash. I do not wish to exaggerate the situation. In every congregation there is a central core or nucleus of convinced adherents. They are the ecclesiastical "die-hards," the faithful few; they have clung to the cause through fair weather and foul; perhaps it is a tradition, a family heritage or a conviction, but they can be counted upon, and not one word should ever be said to disparage their loyalty to their faith. They can be reckoned upon, and they will have to be reckoned with, but they cannot hold the future or turn back the forces of union. At the outside they do not number more than one-tenth, and it is a simple fact that the denominations are in a position of unstable equilibrium.

You cannot maintain a cause which is not supported by the public opinion of your own people. Advancing with the inevitableness of the dawn and the energy of the spring-time, is the growing conviction that the actual differences are not a sufficient ground for separation. There are unmistakable signs both among the ministry and the laity. The denominational tie counts for less than it

did with the most eminent Nonconformist ministers. They already regard themselves as ministers of the Free Church rather than of any particular section. They pass from one denomination to another without a scruple. Some of the most honoured names occur to the mind at once in this connection, Dr. Campbell Morgan, Dr. F. B. Meyer and Dr. Jowett. The latter was minister of the church in Birmingham, which is the Vatican of Independency, and he passed to one of the most famous and powerful Presbyterian churches in the world. Nor was there any friction or sense of disloyalty, and now he is back to Congregationalism at Westminster Chapel. The question must occur to the layman, if all this is right and proper to a public teacher who is in a sense a trustee and custodian of an inheritance, how much more permissible must it be for a private and perhaps an obscure member. In a sense there are no real denominations left, that is, of those who are united by a common belief. In the various communions very few remain who really believe that the distinctive mark is an adequate reason for division. The denominational idea begins to break down at the outset, and when a generation has passed away the Church includes among its adherents those who have entered on the ground of marriage, or of ties of home and parentage, or for the sake of geographical convenience, or under the spell of a favourite preacher.

The ties become less and less concerning faith, and more and more legal or social. The Churches are no longer the watertight compartments which once they were. They are much more like a number of packs of cards which have been so shuffled together that no one can find the original packs. Sectarian distinctions have ceased to be a vital issue. It is not that the people are more indifferent to principle than their fathers were, or less willing to make sacrifices for the sake of conscience. We know now that they contain in their ranks myriads who are willing to fight for an ideal and to die for a cause in which they believe. But they perceive that the situation has really changed. They cannot escape from the atmosphere of their time or from that current of ideas which is running like a mill stream. Let me not be misunderstood. I have always urged that, in the present distribution of religious forces, each one should do his utmost for his own communion. I have no sympathy with those who spread out the gold of Christian love so much that it has the thickness of gold-beater's skin; or with those who love humanity so much that they utterly neglect their own homes; or with those who are so expansive in their fellowship that it equally embraces every part of the globe and particularly the part that is most distant, while no one ever expects any help from them in their own Church or

denomination. No one could ever regard me as an indifferent Baptist. I plan and toil for the Church of my own faith, that when the grand festival of union comes she may be led to the altar in radiant beauty, a bride whom any one may be proud to have. Yet I am convinced that the religious life of our time and country must take a new form if it is to retain public allegiance. The days of denominationalism are numbered. There is nothing more pathetic or useless, in this world, than clinging to dead issues, worn-out methods and antiquated programmes. Let the Churches renew their life and energy as the call of God breaks over the battleground in this new morning, and let them not link themselves to those who are always raking the ashes of burnt-out fires, the flitting, ghostly Jacobites, who come up once a year to lay their wreath upon a tomb, or to the doomed garrison which is trying to hold the fort with obsolete weapons.

A yet more serious consequence of the existing divisions is that they tend to belittle the big things of religion and to magnify the small things. In other words, they afford a most striking instance of the tragedy of the misplaced emphasis. In spite of the fact that, as has been pointed out, every great truth or sacred principle which was the ground of separation is now accepted by all the Evangelical Free Churches, it is still urged that "a little

sectarianism is not a bad thing," and that, whatever the individual adherent may do, it is wise to maintain a corporate witness even to a minor truth or principle. The penalty of such a form of witness is, and must be, a false perspective and proportion. Always to live near to one form or doctrine, to be incessantly occupied with it, and in fact to exist to maintain it, is at last, if it is really subordinate, to give it an unreal importance. Professor Osborne tells us in *The Faith of a Layman* that as he once found himself on the battlefield of Senlac, a mighty sadness stole into his breast. "In the eleventh century as well as in the nineteenth and the twentieth men had staked their all on trifles and had interpreted proportions wrongly. The warriors on both sides on that sinister day thought that the stake for which they were fighting was *the* stake. And yet how prodigiously they were mistaken! The crown they mutually fought for was a mere trifle in comparison with the genuine stakes and sweetnesses of life." Can we not, as we realize the perverted conception of values, like an old-time controversialist, who at the close of the day was wearied and sad at the spectacle of a lost world, resolve, under an awful sense of the greatness of the truths in which we are agreed, that we will spend our "time in the main matters wherein consisteth salvation"? It has been the tragedy of the misplaced emphasis that Churches

which have given their life-blood for truths which are the priceless treasure of the Faith should so often and generally be supposed to stand for fads and crotchets and things of little consequence. I regard the present situation as one of grave and tremendous peril. By our divisions we have obscured the issue and created the impression in the minds of our young people that nothing matters. Try to get a satisfying answer from them as to the essential witness of the churches, and you will fail. They will assign some point of division, some badge of a sect, and they will tell you in the same breath that it has no importance for them. It is high time that preachers in the pulpit got out of an unreal world. The young people who sit in the pews look upon the message as professional, and they do not believe it. Parents grounded in the faith often have little knowledge how far the fair barque so lately launched has broken from the old moorings. Ministers of religion are often kept out of that inner world of reserve and questioning. The young soul is always striving to find itself, but what it does know and see clearly to-day is that the things for which the churches seem to stand have no place or value in its spiritual quest.

On the other hand, there is no religious movement of our time which so appeals to or stirs the enthusiasm of young men and women in our churches as does the move-

ment for Free Church unity. They hate insincerity and detest sham profession, and they desire something tangible, glowing, not vague and in the air, but taking shape on the solid earth, which shall bring about a worthier Church and one of which they can be more justly proud. The unbroken witness of our chaplains at the front is that this is the one Church question in which Free Church officers are interested. It would provide a channel for their energy and trained abilities on their return, and would give many of them scope for the future. Without it we may be certain that large numbers will drift away from our ranks or become indifferent. When Dr. Burford Hooke was Chairman of the Congregational Union, he said to me one day that he had become a convert to my proposals. During his year of office he had travelled far and wide and stayed in the homes of leading members of the Churches, and he had found that if we were to keep the young public school and university men, the sons and daughters in whom lies the chief promise for the future, we must bring about in some form a united Free Church of England. Or to take another instance, the most touching and inspiring which has come under my own knowledge. Ralph Moulton was one of those finer souls fired with splendid dreams and ideals from which many who had followed his career hoped much. He came of a family distin-

guished in Wesleyan Methodism, and which has played a great part in law, scholarship and religion. We still mourn the loss of the fine and cultured spirit of his father, Professor Hope Moulton. The son, Ralph, in August 1914, was awarded the scholarship at Cambridge in International Law, and on the same day received his commission in His Majesty's Army. There were few letters home from the fields of France in which he did not ask as to the progress of the scheme for Free Church union. He said repeatedly that there was nothing that so inspired his enthusiasm and faith or would so command his labour. On August 5, 1916, he fell, giving up his life for his country. He is one of a great multitude of the living and the dead, whose young voices reach us from earth and sky, calling us to fresh courage and persistency.

CHAPTER VII

DENOMINATIONALISM—GAIN AND LOSS

III

“ Ah ! but traditions, inventions,
So many men with such various intentions ! ”
ROBERT BROWNING.

My purpose in the ensuing chapter is to examine three separate aspects of the present situation. First the difficulty of united action; then the effect upon the ministry, and lastly what is generally known as overlapping.

(1) The Free Churches can never make their full impact upon the life of the nation while they are split up into sections and unable to bring their united force to bear upon a single point. It is evident that great calls come to them and meet with only a very partial response; golden opportunities knock loudly and insistently at their doors, some of which will never recur, but they are not seized by the Free Churches, and they pass into other hands. It is not that these Churches lack statesmen or resources. They have both, and there is little they could not do if only they were in

living touch with one another. Let me illustrate this in one or two ways.

The National Mission of Repentance and Hope was a striking example of perfect and complete organization. It set the Church of England in a very attractive light, not relying upon its establishment, or its prestige, or its great place in the world, but going back to the time when there were none of these things and to the original message, "repent and believe the gospel." No doubt it was seriously handicapped by national conditions. The manhood of the country was at the war or working under excessive strain. Women and girls of every class were cheerfully undertaking new tasks and burdens. The Church of England faced these disadvantages with courage and faith. From the archbishops downwards (and this is the point), every one bent to the work with a will. There were no divided counsels. The bishops, clergy and messengers advanced as a united host. They thought of, and prepared for, every class of the community. There was unity of command. It was the spectacle of one Church going forth gallantly on an immense enterprise, and though there is plenty of room for difference of opinion as to the results, it is certain that zeal burnt in the heart of the English Church so wonderfully as to give a pledge of real life and achievements.

It is humiliating to me as a Free Church-

man to confess that in our present separated condition there is not the slightest chance of our doing anything of the same kind, or on the same scale. Yet anything less, anything merely denominational, will not appeal to the people. Representatives have been called together to consider the possibility of united action when the war is over. Dr. Selbie has pleaded for it with passion and eloquence. Conference after conference has been held, and the conviction forced upon me is that, while all the intellectual and spiritual elements exist in ample measure, they cannot be brought together. No one can pledge his own Church. No one is prepared to give the untiring labour, the protracted sacrifice, the concentrated thought, which would be essential to success upon a national scale. Each denomination is laying its plans for its own mission and advancement, and is resolved neither to be forestalled nor interfered with by any other. As for united leadership, it is impossible unless the Free Churches realize in a way they do not at present that they have a common cause.

The second illustration is drawn from the Great War. At the beginning it was seen that it would be without parallel in history as to the numbers engaged. It has not been a conflict between professional soldiers. From every class of the community men have left their homes and the arts of peace and have

taken their place in muddy trenches, on monotonous plains, and under burning suns and eastern skies. Never was such a chance presented to the churches. They could have followed the men everywhere. They could have exercised a ministry of welcome and comfort and moral strength. The nation would have supported them. But, again, in their divided state there was and could be no centre of leadership, no one commanding mind. It was left to an institution, which had at that time nothing like the network of machinery or the resources of the Churches, to see and use the opportunity. In this vast enterprise the Y.M.C.A. has found its soul. It has caught the ear of the nation, and, what is more, it has rendered incalculable service and has won grateful recognition. We have missed one great day in history, but there is another coming, the day of peace, and it seems to me that far heavier penalties will be exacted from us as the Nemesis of division unless we mend our ways.

I am not unmindful of the great services which all the Churches have rendered. They have not only sent forth their manhood, opened their buildings at home to the troops, provided multitudes of workers for the Y.M.C.A., but they have shown in all sorts of ways that there is no sacrifice from which they would have shrunk. They have given of their very best to the Chaplaincy

service, and it is in this direction that the value of a united policy on the part of the Free Churches has been most manifest, and if to-day for the first time they have obtained full recognition in the army both as to the number of chaplains and also as to their due share in higher rank and administration, it is because the Free Churches have given up confusing the military mind with our divisions and have had the wisdom to stand together.

(2) Again, denominationalism affects the ministry most disastrously as to supply, training, sphere and ideals. Here we come to the heart and centre of the problem. The most precious gift of our Lord to His Church is an apostolic and a richly endowed ministry. Such a ministry is vital to the Free Churches. It is a common interest, it is their most essential interest. This is what Dr. Forsyth really means when he says that "with its preaching Christianity stands or falls . . . at least in those sections of Christendom which rest less upon the Church than upon the Bible." I am deeply conscious that the root and secret of the whole matter is here. With so few exceptions as to be insignificant, the church is what the minister makes it. To a great extent he determines the measures of its activity and usefulness. The spiritual life of the church will not rise higher than his own; the care of souls must fall chiefly upon him. If he

himself is right, all the adverse influences of the age may surge and beat about him, but he triumphs as though they were not there. He must be apt to teach, one who is instinct with sacrifice and moral earnestness, who suggests by his bearing the unseen and the eternal, who has healing in his touch and who mediates the mystical and the divine. It is essential that the ministry should supply a leadership, not merely official, but based upon spiritual power, unselfishness, vital and transparent goodness. Among the complex qualities which confer leadership there is none more evident than courage. In the secular world, there is a glamour about some men, for they have the dash and spirit of the true soldier. They go on in front waving their bright swords, and the ranks come up to them cheering. They are forgiven much, since the world longs for this ever fresh and radiant spirit of youth and buoyancy. More than any other profession the ministry depends upon character. "The only profession which consists in being something," says President Wilson, "is the ministry of our Lord and Saviour—and it does not consist in anything else. It is manifest in other things, but it does not consist of anything else."

It is of the first importance, therefore, to the churches that they should attract to their ministry those who possess these high and rare qualities, and that when young and

gifted souls consecrate themselves to the work they should not be beaten by impossible conditions, disillusioned and left bare of enthusiasm and courage. The current of the age is running strongly against the selection of the ministerial calling. Indeed, it seems as if the most powerful minds of our generation were giving themselves to the discovery and application of physical forces. While on the one hand the world and the Church are becoming less willing to listen to the man who has nothing to say, on the other, our most gifted young men are more unwilling to risk what the Free Church ministry has to offer. Therefore we should remove hindrances, and, above all, any real grounds for believing that a man can use his life more fully in another calling than in the ministry. When the choice has to be made, among all the discouragements operating upon the mind, there is nothing comparable to the disquieting and repelling impressions of Free Church divisions. They are everywhere visible in their nature and effects. Often the young student grows up in the midst of them. The little community, with its small population and its many chapels, with its sectarian competitions and antagonisms, with its unceasing financial pressure and its disappointed ministers, tends to turn away the thoughts and aspirations of the strongest and the ablest. A strong man, it has been said,

wants an arena and not a nest or a hole. If it were hardship and sacrifice in a dense population or on the mission field, it would be different, but "men do not feel called upon to endure hardship for the sake of a theory of Church government." The fact is that the idea is circulating in our homes like a slow poison that the Free Church minister in most cases has no chance; in the country, the utmost he can hope to do is to keep a few faithful souls together and not to lose them to his ministerial competitors. What we need is the reconstruction of our entire policy, so that a young man may feel that, instead of eating his heart out in a struggle with a fatal system, the Free Church minister has an unequalled sphere for the consecration of a man's life and the effective use of his personality.

(3) This brings me to one of the most serious and depressing problems of Free Church life in England, the problem of overlapping or the distribution of our religious forces and the loss which it entails. The present system is not only ineffective, but it also involves an enormous waste of men and money, the wasteful use of our forces both in town and country, competition everywhere, the merciless law of competition which reigns in commerce, the law of nature, "nature red in tooth and claw," applied to our churches. The chief argument for Free Church unity has always consisted for me in

the ideal purpose and spirit of the church itself, but I must frankly confess that my audiences everywhere have been chiefly moved by the folly and shame of overlapping. Here is the startling fact, that the distribution of our forces is denominational. The emphasis of separation has shifted, the conditions of population are changed, the moral support has gone, but the policy remains the same. No one, if he were beginning *de novo*, would at this time of day introduce a system which makes success impossible in so many spheres, brings ruinous competition into the villages, and clearly does not meet the real situation and needs in the towns. Is there a single district in this land in which our forces are arranged with a view to the best interests of religion? It is precisely as if the whole face of the country had been altered, but the great lines of railway were laid for the England of one hundred years ago, and the trains ran on, missing most of the towns and putting the passengers down at the villages where they did not want to be. Is it either rational or Christian that in the typical English village there should be the Church of England, Baptist, Congregational, Wesleyan Methodist chapels, and also a Primitive or United Methodist, and perhaps both? Let no one say that I am anxious to turn the Church into a successful business concern because I deplore waste and inefficiency. The cry for

efficiency is heard everywhere, and the Churches can only disregard it at their peril. The question of the distribution of force is not insignificant. If our shores to-day are secure from the foot of the invader and from horrors more appalling even than those which have befallen Belgium, it is largely because, some years ago, Lord Fisher, or, as he then was, Sir John Fisher, found that our fleets were in the Atlantic as if to defend us against America, or in the Mediterranean as in the time of Nelson, and he put their fighting strength in the North Sea. The distribution of religious forces, both in town and country, requires a similarly drastic revision. In large towns, chapels are frequently crowded together in the centre, while outlying districts are almost uncared for. I stood recently at the heart of a great town and could count within a few hundred yards of each other half a dozen large places of worship. Two of them were of the same denomination. I was told that most of them were only a quarter filled at the Sunday services. Many of the supporters would wish to move into an unoccupied area, but they know that they would be engaged in a hopeless struggle with vested interests and prejudices. In choosing the site for a new church very little regard is paid to the proximity of an already existing one of another denomination. Those who have searched long and deeply into the "Religious

Life of London " and have reported the fearfully depressing facts, especially in the poorer districts, tell us that there is a complete absence of any concerted action or plan. The result is a disorderly growth and failure. In the villages, the case goes by default. The Free Church system is not the source of peace but of strife. It is based upon the assumption that the cause must be maintained at whatever cost of religion or common sense, and that a number of Christian people cannot agree to worship together. It is the denial of Christianity under the specious plea of fidelity to principle. Sometimes "causes," all of the same denomination, are kept apart not by any so-called principle but by feuds. They do not pretend to love one another. As a matter of fact, they cordially dislike each other. Meanwhile, if the churches with their traditional separations attract one-tenth of the villagers, they repel nine-tenths. The youths and girls of the village stand at the street corners and are not interested in these sectarian disputes. If the conscience of Non-conformity were not hardened by use and custom it would declare that the scandal of overlapping must stop. I sometimes wish that an intelligent inhabitant of the planet Mars could come down into our midst and tell us what he thought about it all. In default of this, I may illustrate the principle from American instances, and cite the

opinion of the Bishop of Chicago upon an extreme case. "Down in Indiana there is a village of 200 inhabitants. It has six churches. One wonders if it has any Christianity." Indeed, in America the method of division appears to have been carried out with great thoroughness. We read, for example, of a group of villages in Michigan with a total population of seventeen hundred, with fifteen churches and thirteen resident ministers at work. Some curious statistics have been worked out in the United States, which yield the conclusion that in a number of small country towns with one, two or three churches respectively, "the average number of members in each is 110 where a town has only one church, 71 where it has two, and 51 where there are three." What it would have got down to where the town or village has six or seven we can only guess. Again, the statistics indicate that where there are two churches in a village, 77 per cent. of the energy of both is spent in competition, and where there are three "93 per cent. of effort must be competitive." When we pass beyond this, human language and calculations break down. But we need not turn our eyes away to America, or to any other field of religious labour than our own, to discover the results of this "fidelity to principle."

The cost of overlapping cannot be expressed in statistics. It is chiefly moral and spiritual. It is the loss of fellowship, love,

warmth, nobility, the strength which comes through union. Above all, it is the loss of any appeal to the outside world. The lost sheep should be the chief burden on the heart of the Church. It is not an ark in which eight righteous are saved while the world goes down in a flood of ruin.

It is a difficult and delicate task to cite individual instances. I have collected some statistics, and in every case they have been carefully verified. Perhaps it is best not to quote the names of particular towns and villages, for we are all more or less like David in that we condemn in the abstract what we condone in practice. I may refer to the following—

(a) A country town with two Anglican churches, a Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, Congregationalist, and two Baptist chapels, the total Free Church attendance about 400.

(b) A country town with a population of 2,500. It has nine places of worship—two Anglican churches, a Congregationalist, two Baptist, Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist chapels and two sections of the Plymouth Brethren, with a seating accommodation of 2,310.

(c) A country town which with its outlying parishes has a population of 4,250. It contains fifteen churches and chapels, including Baptist, four Wesleyan, Congregational, United Metho-

dist and two Primitive Methodist, with a total seating accommodation of 3,525.

(d) A country town famous as the birthplace of a great religious leader. Population 1,836. An Anglican church with a Mission, Baptist, Wesleyan, United Methodist and Primitive Methodist. Seating accommodation 1,600.

(e) A country town, population 9,500. The various churches and chapels seat 7,410 and are Church of England, Wesleyan, two Baptist, United Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Congregational and Roman Catholic.

I may add a number of instances in tabular form.

TABULAR STATEMENT ON OVERLAPPING

Town or Village.	Popu- lation.	No. of Places of Wor- ship.	Seating Accom- moda- tion.	Denomination.						Other denomin- ations.
				C. E.	Bapt.	Cong.	P. M.	U. M.	Wes.	
1	200	3	750	1	1		1			
2	550	3	690	1	1				1	
3	700	4	700	1			1		1	1
4	700	4	700	1	1		1		1	
5	750	4	670	1	1				1	1
6	1000	4	640	1	1			1		1
7	1300	5	830	2	1				1	1
8	1800	3	795	1	1		1			
9	2300	7	1600	1	2		1		1	2
10	3500	9	2860	1	2	1	1		1	3
11	3769	10	3300	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
12	3900	8	3180	2	1	1	1		1	2
13	4200	6	2270	1	1	1	1	1	1	
14	4700	10	2770	1	1	1	1		1	5
15	5000	10	3380	3	1	1	1		1	3

Finally, it is high time that the Free Churches gave serious thought to the comparative gain and loss of denominationalism. Each one has done that which was right in its own eyes, and the churches have slipped, almost in absence of mind, into the present situation. They have reason to be grateful to God for the part they have played in the religious history of the last three centuries; they may well be proud of the heroic courage, the fidelities, the persistent sacrifice, the indifference to worldly gain or honour, the refusal "to alter or neglect" an iota of the Word of God, the confessors, the prophets and teachers, the nameless heroes and quiet saints of the meeting-house. We shall honour them by fighting the good fight in our day as they did in theirs and by being faithful to the light we have. We do not honour them by making parrot cries of their great words, or ruts of the paths which they hewed out for themselves. The real question is whether the Free Churches are prepared to pay the price of progress. It cannot be in the same coinage. If it were persecution, proscription or social ostracism, it would be easy, for they have never shrunk from these, but it is not. Have they realized that they may be called by God to seem to turn their back upon their past? The Jew of the Apostolic Church found it hard to forsake Abraham and Moses and the oracles of God. Have they understood that to-day they may be on the way to Damascus, and

that in their case obedience to the heavenly vision may be to heal the wounds and end the separation which their fathers made? It may be that the Spirit is calling them to closer fellowship with those with whom they have had little to do. This may be their soul's conflict, when the great sheet knit into four corners is let down from heaven, to resist the impulse to cry, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean." To cling to great names and institutions and vested interests and formulæ is to forswear the control of the living God for that of the dead hand. "The ideal," says a writer, "is rather the attitude of the humble local preacher who, when God told him to do a thing which seemed in direct opposition to the Divine order of the day before, gave the Almighty 'no back-talk,' but simply 'went and did it.' There will certainly come a time in our experience when a demand or message, apparently in sharp contradiction to all that has gone before, will present itself with Divine authority before our amazed consciousness." The Free Churches have reached a stage in the religious life of this country when, if they are simply a denomination and not a united Church, they are doomed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NATURE OF CHURCH UNITY

"Yet do thy work; it shall succeed
In thine or in another's day."

J. G. WHITTIER.

THE subject which I propose to deal with in this chapter is Church Unity, and it is important to note the distinction between unity and union. Unity properly applies to that which may be regarded as a single body in which the several parts are under one control, or animated by one life, or working together in harmony. We believe in the unity of God and that there are three Persons in the Blessed Trinity. The plant of wheat is a unity, the root, the blade and the ear. A watch has unity; all the parts and movements work together controlled by a spring, though the movement of the hands is very different in character from that of the wheels. Union is the bringing together of independent bodies, putting them into a common relation for a certain object. A bundle of sticks tied together with a string is an artificial union. The Entente Cordiale is a union entered into for political ends. A horse and carriage are a temporary union of

a living and an inanimate thing. By the unity of the Church we mean that the different parts of the one body work together in complete harmony of means and end without any collision or frustration of the life force, each organ fulfilling its function and answering to its own type.

In the ideal sense the Church of Christ has unity. It is one. The one Catholic Church is the whole company of the redeemed in heaven and on earth. This essential unity rests upon the fact that the Church is not man-made, not a human construction or invention, but a new creation in Christ Jesus, informed with grace, built by Him upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which He is the chief corner stone. In the ideal sense, human life is one, humanity is a unity. Amid infinite differences there is something which binds all members of the human family together. Their origin is the creative act of God. They eat, they drink, they sleep, they are born, they die; there are certain faculties which in varying degree they share in common. Yet the ideal unity of humanity is shattered since mankind is split up into warring nations, and no one contends that there is an actual unity of nations because all their members can learn to read or can count up to five. A family is a unity since its members are born of the same parents. They do not come together to form a voluntary union.

Yet the unity of the family may be broken by jealousies and quarrels. In the same way the visible unity of the Church on earth is broken. It cannot, except ideally and spiritually, be regarded as a single body. It is divided into parties and sects and denominations which do not work together in harmony for a common end.

Church unity is a different thing from the unity of Christians, though it is often confused or identified with it. *The Pilgrim's Progress* lives and moves and has its being in a realm in which the things that divide the churches have no significance. Happily, members of different churches most remote from each other have often discovered themselves to be bound together by the most sacred ties. A church, however, is a society. The great Church has become a community of churches. The unity of the churches is clearly something different from that of a number of individuals or of a fortuitous gathering. One writer finds the unity of the Church in the fact that its members repeat the Lord's Prayer, use the same Bible as their textbook, sing the same hymns, make use of bread and wine in the Sacrament, and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Head. But these things express and symbolize the unity of Christians as Christians, and not of churches as churches. Many institutions are admirable and useful, but they are not churches—a club, a congrega-

tion, a Mission, a Salvation Army, an Evangelical Alliance. A church cannot unite with that which is not a church, and, further, when this condition is satisfied, there must be a willingness to work together in harmony as members of the Body of Christ.

The Sub-Committee on Faith and Order, to which I have already referred, in its first report expressed its conviction that "it is the purpose of our Lord that believers in Him should be, as in the beginning they were, one visible society." We can scarcely doubt that it was "the purpose of our Lord that believers in Him," however widely separated by nationality or level of culture, should find themselves in fellowship with the Church in any place where they might come to be. There are geographical reasons why there should be many folds, but there is only one flock. Perhaps no one would dispute that the entire conception of the Church in the New Testament implies unity between all its parts. In His high priestly intercession, on the eve of His passion and death, our Lord prayed for His people, "That they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." A fellowship more complete cannot be expressed or imagined. The oneness of the Father and the Son is a deep we cannot sound. It is perfect, absolute, ideal. It is of love, thought, will. So that we need

not measure words when we speak of the unity of His people. It is without limit and must be chiefly visible in the Church. That it was to be visible is clear, for the effect of its visibility would be that "the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The world was the scene of disunion, wars, rivalries, animosities, different races, colours, tongues, nations, different ranks, possessions, culture, masters and slaves, and into the midst of these warring human conditions came as a birth from heaven "one visible society" which was to transcend all separations; bridge all chasms, "so making peace." Every figure used by Christ and His apostles implied unity—one vine, one flock, one building, one temple, one bride, one body. Indeed, human language toils and almost faints to express this unity, and at last it finds it in the mystical and ideal relation of marriage. Nor is there any reason to think that the Apostolic Church misunderstood the nature of the unity. The parts, separated in space, felt themselves to be parts of the same society. It is inconceivable that any member would have been refused communion anywhere, or that a presbyter would not have felt himself to be a minister of the Church of Christ. In the early Church, those who made a tour through the Christian world, like Ignatius, Hegesippus and Abercius, left it on record that from east to west, and from west to east, the "apostolic faith

proved to be a passport." The Church in that day was a visible society, in many places but with a common witness and activity, an organism in which the life-blood flowed freely and every member was in living relation with every other.

We may take it for granted that Church unity must be a growth. That is no reason, however, why we should sit down, fold our hands and let it alone. We can help its growth by watering the tender plant, and by creating a warm and sympathetic atmosphere. It will aid us to discover the nature of Church unity if I seek, first of all, to ascertain what it is not.

(1) To begin with, the visible unity of the Body of Christ is not the equivalent of co-operation in social service, moral campaigns and civic action. Though such co-operation is of much value, and should be welcomed whenever possible, it cannot be accepted as a substitute for Church unity which can only be "fully realized through community of worship, faith and order." It is entirely excellent when an Anglican bishop, a Roman priest, a Free Church minister and a Jewish rabbi speak from the same platform to purify public entertainments or to promote temperance. Let them not delude themselves, however, that they are advancing the cause of Church unity a single inch. Indeed, I have observed that conferences called ostensibly to deal with the latter have too often slid

insensibly on to the lower and secular plane as the line of least resistance and as a method of approaching a question by entirely evading it. As a way of approach to the ultimate goal of the reunion of the churches, it has no value and must be regarded in this respect as a complete and foredoomed failure.

(2) Again, Church unity is not identical with intercommunion, though it cannot exist without it. Obviously it is a preliminary and necessary condition, for churches which do not regard each other's sacraments as valid are not in fellowship. But it must be remembered that even churches which practise intercommunion and which do not raise any question of validity, may have no real unity. Thus the evangelical Free Churches of England freely unite in the sacrament of Holy Communion, but they are not at one, and their activities and policies are competitive and constantly in collision.

I pass over as only deserving the briefest reference that Church unity cannot be reached by coercion and the method of submission. The weapons and machinery of intolerance have gone even if the spirit survives in individual instances. The modern world has done with the method of persecution, and in the complete and final failure of all efforts to defend the faith by faggot and sword, we may find the verdict of the modern conscience upon the darkest and most terrible page in the history of Christendom.

(3) Church unity can never be a mechanical device, engineered by clever scheming and planning. An automaton may do many things admirably, but it is constructed for a limited end, and there is an infinite gulf which separates it from the spontaneity, initiative and range of life. For a number of clever men to set about bringing Churches together would be worse than useless unless behind and beneath all planning there were living forces, tides of the Spirit, comings together in countless ways. Unity will not come by skilfully joining and fitting together the parts of a machine. God Himself must bind together as living members of one body those who already have become one in love.

(4) Church unity is in essence a different thing from uniformity. I am anxious not to express this in such a way as to contradict the truth of St. Paul's words, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." We are brought up against the old philosophical question, how much can you take away from your concept without it ceasing to be? You may take away from the concept "man" a very great deal before you have lost "humanity," but there must be a point below which you cannot go. What is the irreducible minimum below which a Church ceases to be a Church? If it abandons the sacraments or the ministry, can it still be a Church? Moreover, though unity is not

identical with uniformity in essence, it may depend upon it in fact. It is not a light thing to break away even from a form of government, since it may mean nothing less than revolution. Nor do we justify the sectarian spirit, which rests satisfied with the perpetuation of division rather than the healing of the wounds in the Body of Christ. But admitting all this, the very possibility of Church unity is shattered unless great variations from external uniformity are admitted. In this sense uniformity is only possible in things that are dead, because life always reveals itself in unexpected ways and new manifestations. Nature contradicts uniformity at every point and sets it at naught in beauty and fruitfulness. It is the perpetual creative miracle that trees and flowers, skies and landscapes, all things that the living forces of the universe bring to birth, assume a bewildering variety of forms. This is another way of declaring that the universe is not mechanical, but instinct with life, for machinery produces after one pattern; on the other hand, Nature weaves and paints and builds in endless variety. Uniformity is un-catholic. The Catholic Church has in all ages recognized diversities of faith, rites, ceremonies and operations. The vital forces within the Church have broken out into a rich fertility. Catholicism has never required a pale and colourless identity of ritual or doctrine.

Uniformity is clearly not essential for mutual love, since the members of a family who seem to be most apart in tastes and mental calibre are often the most devoted to each other. To refuse any concession to variety of thought is to ensure unreality. In the light of truth one may perceive one hue or tint and another, another, yet these are not contradictory in the beam of light. We see that uniformity would be fatal when we reflect upon the differences between the races of mankind in customs, habits, and cast of thought, as well as the differences between one country and another.

“ Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the
twain shall meet
Till earth and sky stand presently at God's great
Judgment Seat.”

The necessity of freedom and variety is illustrated in the worship of the Church. Beautiful and sacred forms of devotion have been handed down from past generations. They are precious and helpful until they are converted into iron chains to bind the people of God. I am inclined to agree with the late Ian Maclaren, that as the level of culture rises, the desire for liturgical worship increases simply because breaches in reverence and taste hinder and offend the cultured, and these are almost inevitable in non-liturgical worship. Yet unity must frankly admit great varieties in the worship of the Church answering to the varieties of religious ex-

perience and habits of mind, and must not seek to impose upon all any form of prayer, however beautiful or ancient.

The insistence upon uniformity was the fatal blot on the Reformation settlement in England, and, as an inevitable consequence, it led to nonconformity. The monotonous forms of the sixteenth century, with its restraints and repressions, were in marked contrast to the freedom and variety of the Mediæval Church, with its scholastic parties, its rude, popular religious festivities and its incursions by wandering friars upon the sameness of the parish religion. We cannot wonder that to Elizabeth uniformity seemed to be the only practicable policy. This was her sole and only faith—one land, one creed, one ritual, one Church and one absolute power on the throne. The threatening cloud on the horizon was always the Spanish invasion. No Englishman could be sure that he would not wake up one day to find the Spanish galleons in the Thames and the faggots burning again at Smithfield. It was England against Spain all over the world, and anything which seemed to divide the nation appeared to be treason and disloyalty. The ideal of uniformity remained with the Anglican Church, and was the policy of 1662. Lord Macaulay has elaborated this theme in his own brilliant way. He suggests that the separations from the Church of England which have resulted since the Reformation in the formation of sects,

dissenting bodies and alienated churches, would have been converted by the Church of Rome into Orders, since "she thoroughly understands, what no other Church has ever understood, how to deal with enthusiasts. . . . The ignorant enthusiast whom the Anglican Church makes an enemy, and whatever the polite and learned may think a most dangerous enemy, the Catholic Church makes a champion. She bids him nurse his beard, covers him with a gown and hood of coarse, dark stuff, ties a rope round his waist, and sends him forth to teach in her name. . . . At Rome, the Countess of Huntingdon would have a place in the calendar as St. Selina, and Mrs. Fry would be foundress and first superior of the Blessed Order of Sisters of the Gaols. Place Ignatius Loyola at Oxford. He is certain to become the head of a formidable secession. Place John Wesley at Rome. He is certain to be the first General of a new society devoted to the interests and honour of the Church."

Whatever truth there is in this contrast between the methods of Rome and Canterbury, the Church of England has learnt much since the days of the Tudors and Stuarts and since the eighteenth century. It is still urged, however, by many of its leaders, that the Church depends upon a particular form of government. The Romanist contends that this form is papal, and rests upon the primacy of St. Peter. The Anglo-Catholic contends that it is epis-

copal, and that the principle of succession from the apostles is the essential thing. For the time being, I am concerned only with the latter, but this part of the question will be more properly discussed in a subsequent chapter which relates to the Church of England.

(5) So far, I have followed the method of exclusion. But finally, Church unity is the unity of a living body. We must get back to St. Paul. He has said the last word and the great word. We can never think too deeply upon his teachings as to the Church. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . . . For the body is not one member, but many." One body, then the unity is that of an organism through which flows common life, enriching every member. In one body there is always one personality, complex, varied in operation, but still one. The eye is not as the ear, and we cannot by any possibility realize sights as sounds, yet they are vibrations from the same external object. The personality relates them to one another, unites the different perceptions and forms a common judgment. If it cannot do this, there is insanity. One member is weaker than another, yet it must not be cut off but healed the rather. Each member works for the common end under the impulse of a common life. The hand

does not rule and control the foot, but works with it and for it under the direction of the one will.

Now to state this is to see how great a distance the Churches have travelled from the thought of St. Paul. The fact that there are different Churches in different lands is no breach of unity, but that they do not know and feel themselves to be one is a breach. The sundered members of the Body in our own land break the unity both of spirit and form in ways that were never dreamt of by St. Paul. They go their own way regardless of one another. In numberless instances they ignore one another's existence. They pay lip service to the apostle and also to the seventeenth chapter of St. John. They follow what they conceive to be their own interest or advancement as a denomination without any regard to one another and not much to the Body of Christ. The eye does say to the hand, "I have no need of thee," and the foot does say to the ear, "Because thou art not the foot, thou art not of the body." Nor can the scattered Churches in the midst of a warring world exhibit the visible unity of the Body of Christ until they realize that, though unity is not the only word, yet it is the great and impressive word of our time, and how deeply they have fallen short of the ideals of the New Testament.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAY OF FEDERATION

I

“ The . . . problem . . .
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means : a very different thing ! ”

ROBERT BROWNING.

I HAVE already said that the churches cannot face the new time upon which they are entering, with its new problems and moral demands, in any spirit of hopefulness unless they close their ranks. They must not attempt to carry with them the lumber of the past. The temper and attitude of the modern mind towards Church divisions is such that unrelieved denominationalism will involve inevitable and increasing loss. The churches must seek unity and establish closer relations that religion itself may be saved.

Nothing is more difficult than to translate visions into actualities. Poetry has colour and warmth and soars into the empyrean, but the prose of life must abide the test of a dull grey world. The temperature always

falls when ideals are translated into plans. How often the heart of the enthusiast has died within him as he has told his dreams amid the chilling and ominous silence of practical men. The reader of the prophecies of Ezekiel feels the drop from the vision of the first thirty-nine chapters when the fortieth opens with the plan of the city. The one part is radiant with visions, visions of wheels and lamps and burning coals and gorgeous colours, and the breath of the Spirit coming from the four winds upon the valley of dry bones, visions which bring in the promise: "My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The last section of Ezekiel brings in the man with the measuring-reed in his hand. It is always so in human history, the seer is not often the builder. And I am conscious that any plan which can be propounded will be open to all sorts of objections. Only to rare and doubly gifted souls, a Hildebrand, a Wesley or a Chalmers, has it ever been given to unite splendid idealism with practical sagacity, to have the vision and also to lay the foundation and build the walls so that they will stand the test of time and experience.

In the year 1916, from the Chair of the National Free Church Council I made definite proposals for closer relations between the Free Churches. The question was brought before the Annual Assembly or Conference

of each, and representatives were duly appointed to consider the possibilities and implications of Free Church union, and to prepare a scheme. Eighty-one delegates were appointed, and there was not a single absentee from the Conference which was held at Mansfield College, Oxford, in September of the same year. We who were met together discovered one thing at the outset, if we did not know it already, that the desires of no one representative or group could be exactly and entirely satisfied. Granted that there must be no sacrifice of principle, yet there must be give and take. There was some room for a generous spirit. If any one had gone into the Conference with no power to distinguish between what was essential and what was minor, he would have been totally unfitted to take part and would have been out of harmony with the spirit that prevailed. The atmosphere was devotional throughout. The Conference, which later on held adjourned sessions at the Leys School, Cambridge, and at the Baptist Church House, London, elected me to be Moderator and set up four committees: one on "Faith" (Chairman, Dr. Carnegie Simpson); one on "Constitution" (Chairman, Dr. Scott Lidgett); one on "Ministry" (Chairman, Dr. George P. Gould); and one on "Evangelization" (Chairman, Dr. J. D. Jones); and the final reports of these committees were ultimately adopted by the entire Conference.

Two distinct methods were considered, that of corporate union and the way of federation. Some who were present advocated the former, and clearly, if it were possible, it has great advantages. It has the merit of being easily explained and understood. The example was before us of the amalgamation into one Church of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterians, a union in which the late Principal Rainey played so great a part. Another and more recent instance was the United Methodist Church. It was known that the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists of Canada were preparing plans for a corporate union under the name of the United Church of Canada. Nor could there be any doubt that such a method would strike a more ringing note of unity than the tentative and moderate proposal of federation. It would have been hailed by many with far more enthusiasm, and would have been a more effective remedy for sectarian evils of waste and competition than anything else. Its appeal to the outsider would have been overwhelming, and it would have simplified the religious position in the country beyond all reckoning. Imagine what it would have meant in the history of our time if the chapter of separation could have been closed, and the principles and resources of the Free Churches could have been represented by one Church, its mighty

spirit taking a new form, no longer obscured by divisions or a false emphasis, but fitted to enter in with single eye and purpose at the open door of the vast opportunity of the new time. Such a vision hung for a brief moment over the Conference and then vanished. The moment was not ripe for corporate union.

The way of federation remained, and it is now before the Free Churches. Federation may have a more rigid or a looser meaning, a larger or a smaller content. Its strictly accurate meaning is a league between independent bodies or states under a certain agreement or constitution. A federation is one form of union and a corporate union is another. The former depends chiefly upon moral and spiritual forces rather than upon contracts. No one term exactly expresses the British Empire, though it has aptly been called the British Commonwealth of Nations. The autonomy which each part exercises is derived by devolution from the central authority. The different parts are united to the mother country as Colonies, Crown Colonies, Dominions, Protectorates or Dependencies, and by more or less spiritual and impalpable ties. Yet when we get beneath the form, we find that the British Empire is in essence a federation, since it rests upon agreements and contracts with States which are substantially independent. It is not possible to despise the ties, the

apparently slender threads which bind the different parts together, since the link has been strong enough to bring them across the seas, to unite them in struggle and sacrifice and to form one vast and impregnable rampart of freedom. The most conspicuous example is the United States of America, which has found the solution of its vast problems in federalism, reconciling the autonomy of each State with the authority of the National Central Government, balancing the power of the State in the Senate with the power of the people in the Congress. In 1789, Washington brought together thirteen States in a machinery of government under which their unity and independence could be maintained. The noble and titanic figures of the New World who framed and fought for the Union were sustained by glorious ideals, and triumphed over the counsels of lesser and colder men. But they constructed something which compels to-day the almost idolatrous enthusiasm of millions touched with "a morning vision of its great tasks and certain destiny."

"All the empires we have known in the past and that exist to-day," says General Smuts, "are founded on the idea of assimilation, of trying to force human material into one mould." I may add that this has also been the ideal of ecclesiastical statesmen since Christianity began. A writer who has clearly given much thought to the sub-

ject has pointed out that "it is the federal and not the unitary solution that has most fascination for the modern mind. Federalism is likely to be the twentieth-century maid-of-all-work. Imperialists are turning to it as a panacea for the evils of a crude Imperialism. In the labour world the federal idea holds the field. Trade unions which distrust amalgamation look to federation as the remedy for the inefficiency born of chaos. It is surely right that the Free Churches, as pioneers of liberty and progress, should declare themselves in favour of a federal scheme." Federation is a silken thread and not an iron chain. The fundamental idea is that the autonomy of each constituent part shall be respected, and that whatever is of permanent value in its distinctive witness, order and institutions, shall be preserved. It ought not to pass the wit of man to find a way in which the gains and fruits of history should be secured, and the best elements of all the Churches contributed to the common stock. Federation stands "for the fuller, richer and more various life" of the Churches which compose it. It aims at the practical reconciliation of autonomy with co-operation, liberty with order, and unity with diversity.

I frankly admit that it will involve sacrifice, not of individuals but communities and denominations. Not that they will be asked to give up a shred of principle, but simply

because you cannot enter into any social union without limiting your freedom of action. Through such limitations, our order, security, happiness, and indeed our civilization itself have sprung. Denominations, if they are to advance, must constantly renew the spirit of sacrifice, for it is true of them, as of individuals, that "he who would save his life must lose it." The only question that any of us should ask about sacrifice is whether it is the necessary price of something greater than itself. Our secular world to-day is giving up many things, things that are lesser and outworn, and even the great things, careers and life itself, for the sake of a Cause. And it would be an evil day for the churches if they stood aloof from this world of sacrifice, incapable of surrendering anything, plans or methods or sectarian programmes, for the cause of Unity and of the salvation of men.

It is evident that the federation of the Free Churches does not follow quite the same lines as the union of political States. The title "the United States of the Church" has been happily applied to it, but the federal unions of countries and peoples have geographical boundaries. So far, the problem is simple as compared with an alliance between Churches which exist and work in the same area. But I must refer to the argument, pressed with characteristic lucidity and logical force by the Rev. Canon T. A. Lacey in

Unity and Schism, that there is no place for federation in the ordering of the Church of Christ, since devolution is the method of the Church, and federation, being based on independency, is a denial of visible unity. The objection may be valid from the point of view of strict theory, but it is *doctrinaire*. The very existence of a denomination is an infringement of the visible unity of the Church, and the unity aimed at is that of operation and activity. "Is there one Church or are there many?" asks Dr. Forsyth, and he answers that "the New Testament says both." We must lay firm hold of the fact that the Great Church, the Whole Church, emerges in the denomination and in the local church. If it were not so they could not properly be styled churches at all; but the point is that while they are not ideally nor spiritually independent, they are independent in organization and activity. Federation may, without violence to the term, be properly applied when they come together in close co-operation. Indeed, Dr. Forsyth argues that only as they have the spirit of the Church will they be able to federate, and that "the ecclesiastical mission of the Free Churches is to stand for the Christian right and reality of the federal idea of Church Unity and Catholicity."

I do not maintain that federation is a final goal, or that it is an ideal solution. There are ideals that we must be content

to leave with God, believing that He will bring them to pass. We must be content to be in the current of His thought, not knowing quite where it will carry us, but yielding ourselves to His guidance. The story of Abraham is the story of all time, for those who go out with God always go to a land that He will show them, even though they never possess it. And if there have been moments of regret that the way of corporate union was blocked, all my working life I have sought to discover "first what may be, then how to make it fair up to our means." The value of federation will depend in the long run upon whether the interpretation we give to it is large and generous. We may play with it and make of it only a "flickering expedient," or we may regard it as an intermediate step, not as a stopping-place, leaving it to another generation to walk in the light God shall give, while we walk in ours.

So much for the discussion of the meaning and general principles of federation, in what way it is distinct from the method of corporate union, its place in the modern world, and how far it is admissible in the Church of Christ. I pass on to consider some of the problems with which a federation of the Free Churches will have to deal, and to ask whether federation will be equal to the calls which will be made upon it.

(1) The Oxford Conference proceeded to

examine "the possibility and implication of federation" under four heads. First of all, there was the question of Faith. It was agreed that if the churches were to stand together, they must be able to declare where they stood in the great things. No one dreamt of imposing a new creed or confession with penal clauses, or of imposing a disciplinary standard, or of superseding the doctrinal basis of any of the uniting Churches. A creed is a standard and is intended for individual subscription, but a declaratory statement is a confession, a corporate judgment, and exhibits "the substance of the common faith," as a basis of fellowship and co-operation. It has been repeatedly said that the Free Churches were so divided in doctrine as to render a common statement impossible. It was said that the higher criticism, liberal theology, and I know not what, had so modernized their beliefs that the attempt to express the doctrinal position in terms would only reveal how serious had been the landslide and how great the distance travelled from the Catholic faith. The exact contrary was the fact. There was difference as to modes of expression. Sometimes the statement agreed upon leaned to the formularies of a particular Church. But the result was a *Declaratory Statement concerning Common Faith and Practice* which was catholic, evangelical and positive.

(2) In framing the Constitution, the Con-

ference followed the usual outline and defined the objects, conditions, powers and governing body of the Federation. It was a much simpler task than if we had been seeking to form a corporate union; and for the reason, as I have already pointed out, that a federation must rely mainly upon impalpable and spiritual forces. The vital element to be secured was that the whole idea was based on the autonomy of the uniting churches. I could have wished that the plan had been devised in a spirit of greater mutual confidence rather than of insistence upon safeguards. But those who were present were there in a representative character. Beyond the walls of the Conference were officials, committees and people who had not shared in our discussions or breathed the atmosphere of fellowship in which they took place. Perhaps I was more inclined to remember the movement of Christian Unity sweeping through the world like a breath of God and rising in the sky like a flush of dawn; the current towards closer fellowship running through all the Churches; and the vast and powerful body of conviction and feeling which we should betray if we simply trifled with the question, or only attempted to save the face of the Free Churches before a somewhat derisive world. It must be granted that confidence is born of experience, that the Churches have little experience of working together, and that time

must be given for a more intimate knowledge. The rights of denominations and of minorities had to be conserved. The real achievement of the Conference in this section was the provision of a Federal Council representing all the Churches in the proportion of their membership. It has been the fatal weakness of the denominations, so far as Free Church unity is concerned, that there has been no nexus of administration and no place for common, representative council. The Federal Council is a beginning, and in it, more than in anything else, lies our hope for the future.

The Conference left the name of the Federation for later settlement. It was felt that the child had better be born before it was named, though there are excellent instances in Scripture to the contrary. I earnestly desire the name as well as the thing. We only seem to ourselves to know the thing when we know the name. Various names have been suggested, but the one which appeals most strongly to me—though I do not forget that the union indicated is federal, not corporate—is the United Free Church of England. It has music in it. It contains a declaration and an appeal. In this world a name is a flag, a rallying-point and a battle-cry. I want to hear it from men's lips, to see it on church notice-boards, supplementing, not supplanting, the denominational name, to read it on church note-

paper; and perhaps we little realize the welcome such a name would receive, especially from the young people in all our churches.

(3) The third and fourth sections of the inquiry related to the Ministry and to Evangelization, and the reports of the two committees serve to illustrate two points. The first, that, as I have already implied, the Declaration on Faith and the proposal of a Federal Council as an instrument of unity are the substantial results of the Conference; and second, that the reports will only have value so far as they are translated into action and lead to something better than themselves. They deal with two subjects which are vital to the churches. Their importance cannot possibly be exaggerated. Evangelization is the inner purpose of the whole movement for federation. No one desires new machinery or methods unless they will contribute to this. "Who cares for the Free Churches," asked Dr. Chalmers, "except as an instrument of Christian good?" The one committee reports that the Free Churches do not differ essentially in their conception of the Ministry; the other indicates certain lines of inquiry and sets up a special committee. I am well aware that the committees were limited by their instructions, and that many of the members thought it premature to do more without further reference to their own de-

nominations. But, in fact, we have now come face to face with this question: Do the Free Churches intend to act together, or rather do their leaders intend, for I believe that the people only wait for large and generous leadership? We see that the masses are outside the institutions of religion; that the Churches in separation cannot reach or win them, and that they themselves are declining in numbers and strength. If each denomination is resolved that there shall be no co-operation in anything which concerns its policy, that it is in fact a sacred ark of the covenant which must not be touched, then nothing can be done. Federation is a kind of test of sincerity of the Churches as to unity. It was the bitter complaint of Abraham Lincoln that Christian Southerners said that they would rejoice if slavery were abolished, but they never voted that way. We of the Free Churches must beware lest the English people should have cause to come to the conclusion that we are only talkers; that every one else can unite against the common enemy, but that we cannot; that we can talk for ever about unity, but always vote it down when it takes shape in a practical proposal; that we can spin our theories while the guns thunder at the gates of our Petrograd and the Empire rocks beneath our feet. Let us do all that lies in our power to realize "what may be," and to follow the light that is given to us.

CHAPTER X

THE WAY OF FEDERATION

II

“To advance is now a sovereign need.”

GEORGE MEREDITH.

THE first question which the Federation should take in hand is the wasteful, ineffective and un-Christian distribution of Free Church forces in the country districts. To put it briefly, it must deal with overlapping. I know of no way to correct overlapping except by the closing of a certain number of chapels as centres of regular worship. It is better to come to close quarters at once, for, as I have already said, federation is a test of the sincerity and zeal of the denominations for the visible unity of the Body of Christ.

Let me put it in a concrete form. Take a village, with a thousand inhabitants, in which there are four Free Churches, a Baptist, Congregationalist, and two Methodist, with three resident ministers. Are the central authorities prepared to do their utmost to change this situation by establishing one Free Church for the whole

village, in membership with one of the denominations, with one resident minister, making good the necessary surrenders by similar arrangements in three other villages in which each of the other three denominations shall have a central and united Church? Or, as a first step, are the Baptists and Congregationalists ready to agree on one church in the village of the Congregational order, and the Methodists to agree on one of the Connexional order? To take another example. In the course of my travels, I came across a young Congregational minister, cultured and able, who had just entered upon his second charge. He told me that in his first sphere of labour, a village of eight hundred inhabitants, there were the Church of England (large enough to hold every man, woman and child) and three Free Churches, of which his was one, and that it was only the strength of his convictions which prevented him from throwing up an impossible and humiliating position and leaving Nonconformity altogether. Are the denominations represented in this village prepared to accept one instead of three?

It is necessary to enter more fully into detail and to examine the conditions proposed before an affirmative reply can be given. I am anxious to remove a possible misconception. I am not an advocate of the undenominational Church. I neither criticize nor oppose it, and it may in some

places and under exceptional conditions be the wisest plan. But it is not my plan. The proposal from certain quarters to build an undenominational Church has no support from me. If the Free Churches federate, the aim should be to get the best out of denominationalism and the best out of co-operation. The single, united Church which remains in a village is not to be suspended like Mahomet's coffin between earth and sky, without ecclesiastical relations, but to be in membership with one of the denominations and to give to it its loyal service.

There are, however, alternative forms before the united denominational Church. We have had but little experience in this country, and our data are insufficient to go upon. In the United States, some very interesting experiments have been made with the single Church in small centres of population, though widely different conditions may lessen their value for us. Commissions have been appointed, statistics collected and examined, and the whole subject has been studied with the greatest thoroughness. Some of the results are presented with marked ability by Dr. Ashworth in his volume *The Union of Christian Forces*, and I may reproduce a part of the information which he has gathered.

Two principal methods of the single Church have been tried on a wide scale. The first is known as the "Vermont Plan." It unites

several denominations in one Church, but the members retain their sectarian affiliations, and contributions are earmarked by them to the funds and societies of their own denominations. "Usually the pastors are chosen in succession from the ministry of the constituent denominations." The plan is reported to have been a signal failure, and it is said that "when a Methodist pastor is on the field, if the union is between Methodists and Baptists, the Baptists pray for his removal; and when a Baptist pastor is on the field, the Methodists sit up all night praying for his removal."

The second method, known as the "Maine Plan," is that a Church shall be in membership with one denomination, but that the fellowship shall be open, and free from all sectional restrictions. The spirit of the union is that the members come together upon the basis of the Gospel, upon the essentials, putting the saving of souls and the religious life of the village before their confessedly minor sectarian differences, leaving it to the denominational authorities to safeguard their interests by concerted and mutual arrangements. This plan has met with great success, and has been said to be "the ideal for adoption in all parts of the country." It has worked well when carried out by denominational agencies. The method of interchange is made clear in a resolution of the Commission of the Churches of Christ

in 1914, as follows : " When the Commission finds that an equitable exchange can be made so that in one town denomination A. may surrender to denomination B. its Church interests, and in another town denomination B. can surrender an equal interest to denomination A., then the Commission shall recommend to the two denominations such an exchange." This is substantially the plan recommended in this chapter.

This plan has two aspects which are specially favourable to success. It enables a resident minister to be maintained in each Church, and the conditions would warrant even an exceptionally gifted pastor consecrating himself to the work as something worth all his time and labour. No mistake is greater than to think that anything is good enough for the country. The villager knows whether he likes the preaching, and if he does not like it he absents himself. In and around every village are educated people. Frequently their sons and daughters have been educated at public schools and universities. They read brilliant discussions of current movements of thought in books and magazines, and the conflict between the claims of loyalty and that which is for the good of their own souls is often too painfully in evidence. The strong man is needed in the country pastorate for other reasons which I shall presently assign, but he is intensely needed to maintain the life and

efficiency of the country church. Nor need the local preacher fear that his occupation would be 'gone. It would be indefinitely extended, for the activities of the strong village church would ray out in every direction to the neglected hamlets.

Moreover, the arrangement would be of advantage to all concerned, since one vigorous and flourishing Church would take the place of a number of languishing communities. Some striking statistics have been collected for the State of Ohio by the Presbyterians, which show how close and constant is the relation between the size of the membership of the Church and its working efficiency. The splitting into little congregations in small towns and villages is disastrous, a perpetual element of weakness and discouragement. The Ohio report states: "The impact of a small Church upon society is necessarily slight. There is a momentum to large numbers. We may indicate this by dividing the Churches up into six groups according to the size of their membership, and giving the statistics of growth for each. These groups will be as follows: Churches with a membership of 25 or less, 26 to 50, 51 to 100, 101 to 150, 151 to 200, and 201 and over. In each of these groups there are included from 100 to 400 Churches, enough to show clearly the tendencies. The percentage of growing Churches within each of these groups in the order given is as

follows : 2·2 per cent., 16·6 per cent., 33·5 per cent., 48·2 per cent., 58·5 per cent., and 79 per cent. The regularity with which the increase of efficiency and ability to survive parallels the increase in membership is very striking."

Every denomination has its Home Mission Committee, though sometimes it is called by another name. These again work in close connection with local committees for counties or districts. Their operations extend to both town and country. These committees give constant time and thought and raise immense sums of money that the village minister and the village chapel may be sustained. It has been worth it all, and in no respect more clearly than this, that the town life is constantly replenished by, and most of the leaders of every church have come from, the country. But I want to point out how small a proportion of the total effort goes to aggressive work, and how large a proportion to keeping the doors open for a little flock who would be much better in a larger fold. To attempt aggression in a village would be almost to violate the comity of village religious life, since the gain of one Cause will probably be the loss of another. It would be entirely different if the common denominational interests were centred in a united Church. Then every cottage could be visited, the children gathered to the Sunday School, and the entire local

forces of the Free Church brought to bear upon a single point. Nothing could present such a striking demonstration of the earnestness of the denominations for the salvation of the people as to divide rural England into Free Church parishes, to make the best united provision for the religious needs of each parish, to form united committees representing the Federation for large areas or districts, and to appoint Home Mission Superintendents to go with apostolic zeal through the land to cheer, to advise and to perfect in every parish the organization for bringing religion to the homes of the people.

During the next few years the reconstruction of England will be most manifest in a changed and regenerated country life. Hundreds of thousands of men who have led an open-air existence during the war will be unwilling to go back to the confinement of the office or the factory. Many have been keenly interested in what they have seen of small farming and peasant proprietorship in France and elsewhere. Political changes in land tenure will be made. Holdings will be provided for soldiers who sprang from the country and will go back to the country. It will be a new rural England. The village will come to its own at last. In these changed conditions and demands, the Free Churches must take their part. Soldiers in camp and field have had no taste for sectarianism, and they will utterly despise

it if it tries to lift its head in the regenerated village. The curse of country life has always been its dullness, its grey monotony; the fact that no one expects anything to happen, and nothing ever does happen. This more than anything else has driven the young people into the towns. The Free Churches must provide an institutional life. The centre of the village should not be the public-house, but the Free Church with its Institute, and the Parish Church. What is needed more than anything else is the application of the methods and programmes of the late Silvester Horne to the country. If the Churches are too divided, too sectarian, too narrow in their outlook for this, then the opportunity will pass into other hands. It might all be so different from what it is. The one Free Church, with architectural beauty and dignity, the centre and symbol of the modern religious spirit of welcome and fellowship, just as the historic village church with its Gothic walls and mediæval windows is the symbol of reverence and order; the one Free Church minister, no longer disillusioned and yearning to escape, no longer one among a number of competitors, but moving through the village as the friend and counsellor of all.

The most striking feature of our national life during the last century has been the rapid and enormous growth of the towns. The towns themselves have changed in their

general conditions, the centres becoming commercial and industrial, while suburbs have been thrown out on every side, some of them spacious and beautiful, and some densely crowded with artisan populations. The process still goes on, and the town extends further and further out with the increased application of electrical force. In the towns, as in the villages, the Free Churches have not faced the new conditions with any concerted plan. Each denomination has done that which was right in its own eyes. Frequently there is overlapping at the centre. The down-town church in poorer districts languishes under the voluntary principle and at last is turned into a cinema. In the suburb, churches are erected, often loaded with debt, eyeing each other's proximity with resentment. The net result is a decline in attendance at public worship; more churches, fewer worshippers. Young people brought up in one denomination migrate to a suburb where it is not represented, or where they do not like the church of their own order which they find there. The prevailing system has its baneful influence upon them, and they simply drop out of public worship altogether. The Free Church position has been more thoroughly and systematically examined in Liverpool than anywhere else. Exhaustive inquiries and repeated censuses of attendance at public worship have been taken. The con-

clusions are discouraging from every point of view. The lack of any concerted plan has resulted in a decaying Free Church life. It is reported that there are three hundred and twenty-five Nonconformist places of worship of at least thirty distinct types, huddled together, or set down without any common plan. As to statistics, the 1908 religious census of Liverpool recorded a total Free Church attendance in the morning of twenty thousand and in the evening of forty-five thousand, out of a population of seven hundred and forty-six thousand; while in 1912 the attendance on a given Sunday for the six largest denominations was seven thousand fewer than in 1902. Apart from united action, there does not appear to be any hope of improvement. Happily, there is no difference of opinion as to the principle itself that a federation should aim at securing mutual consideration and economy of force.

There are few things which the denominations guard so jealously from external interference as the training of the ministry; there are few about which the laity feel so strongly. The narrow grooves and the denominational atmosphere of the theological seminary do not commend themselves to the average layman; nor does he understand why so many buildings and so many professors should be necessary for such a comparatively small number of students. Co-operation ought to bring about a great advance.

First of all, it is admitted that the theological student is often very imperfectly educated when he enters college, and the first business is to bring him up to a certain level in arts. I submit that this would be more effectively done at the university, and it would have this unspeakable advantage, that the neophyte would from the first breathe a freer air and be compelled to measure himself against men preparing for many different professions. Certainly the Presbyterian student who takes his course at Edinburgh, or Glasgow, or St. Andrews, before entering the Divinity Hall, may lose something of the personal supervision of a seminary, but he gains something which will stand him in good stead in the battle of life. The Free Churches will require their Divinity Halls, though even they need not be sectarian; but if they could devise a scheme for a common training in arts at the university of the candidates for the ministry who require it, they would render an incalculable service to the entire ministry. In this connection let me go back to a reference in the first chapter. The ordained ministry of women will, it is to be hoped, take its place in our churches in the near future, but it must be under certain conditions. And the first of these is that all women candidates for the ministry who are accepted by the churches shall have the same theological training, the same educational equip-

ment and the same necessary period of training as men. I am sure that no woman candidate would desire to have less. And I desire to offer the suggestion that the ideal ministry would be a double one. There are parts of ministerial service which would be best entrusted to a woman. But under the present unrelated denominational system, congregations find it quite sufficiently difficult to maintain one minister without adding a colleague. It would be wholly different, for example, in the rural church, if one strong congregation existed instead of three or four, one with many-sided activities of an institutional kind. Without some such change, which I look to federation to bring about, the field for the ministry of women may be much more limited than is to be desired.

I have already stated my view, that Church Unity will never come by the denominations uniting in social service, but I am equally sure that if they could be brought together as Churches into a real federation, they could exert a greatly increased influence on all public and moral issues. Indeed, the influence would be enormous of a decision of the Federal Council, authorized by the Church Assemblies, upon many questions, among which I may name temperance, the education and protection of children, purity, the improvement of the conditions of life for the poor, the safeguarding of the day

of rest. In America a *Federal Council of the Churches of Christ* has been formed, and its activities and achievements are presented in a very instructive volume by Dr. Charles S. Macfarland, the General Secretary. It can justly claim that it has led to increased attention being paid by the churches to public service, and that it has become a clearing-house for ideas.

But the ugliness and the folly of our divisions is nowhere so apparent as on the Foreign Missionary field. The tragedy of denominationalism is complete when we extend it to the heathen world. It is veiled and obscured for the moment by what is known as the comity of missions, but it is obvious that the difficulties increase in proportion as any heathen people are Christianized. We ought to come together if for no other reason than that by our sects we are perilously near putting the Son of God to an open shame before the heathen. Nothing is more painful to an outsider than to listen to family disputes. Do we want to make the native Christians as bad as ourselves? They have not been familiar with this thing from their very birth as we have been. They cannot be expected to know, as we do, that our differences do not matter and have nothing to do with essential Christianity. The missionary is the most apostolic figure in the world. Like St. Paul, he goes out determined to know

nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But instead of witnessing to Christian Unity, he becomes an object lesson of the disunion of Christians. He goes out with a set form with which to override native tastes, temperaments, customs and institutions. I cannot illustrate this better than by quoting from Dr. A. J. Brown in *Unity and Missions*, who records "the grim remark of an East Indian pastor that, 'Were it not for the vigilance of the Western shepherds, the Indian sheep would some fine morning be all found in one fold.'"

A Chinese clergyman, the same author reports, in a union meeting of the Churches about Nanking, arose and said, as he pointed in turn to several missionaries, "You are an American Presbyterian; and you can't help it, for you were brought up that way. You are a Canadian Methodist; and you can't help it, for you were brought up that way. You are an English Churchman; and you can't help it either, for you were brought up that way. But we are Chinese Christians, and we do not propose to permit you men from abroad to keep us apart."

The Edinburgh Conference was the most serious and convincing demonstration of the need for unity in Foreign Missions. One entire volume of the Report is devoted to Commission VIII, *Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity*, but every volume contains references to the same subject. I

ask the indulgence of the reader if I refer at length to some of the utterances, for I am anxious to show that missionary leaders and missionaries are already convinced. Thus the late Prof. Denney said, "The work to be done is so great that it is impossible for the Churches even to contemplate it so long as they stand apart." Dr. G. Sherwood Eddy declared his belief "that the present missionary opportunity makes a demand for unity as the condition of success in the work. These united forces that oppose us call for unity." In the course of an address, Mr. Chang Ching-Yi, of the London Missionary Society, said in a plea for union, "From the Chinese standpoint there is nothing impossible about such a union. Such difficulties as may be experienced will be clear to our Western friends and not to ourselves." Other missionaries of the London, the Baptist and the Presbyterian Societies declared that the best and most intelligent Chinese leaders were resolved on unity, and were ahead of the average missionary; while Bishop Roots said that "the alternative to this requirement seems to be that we forfeit our position of leadership among the Christian forces of China. . . . That leadership will undoubtedly arise, perhaps even outside the ranks of the duly authorized ministers of the Christian Church in China."

It has been my lot to travel in Europe and to study religious conditions in various

countries. An open door will be shortly set before us in France, Belgium, perhaps in Russia, such as we have never known. I am convinced that it is hopeless to seek to win countries under the sway of the Roman or the Orthodox Church, or of infidelity, with anything else than a united Evangelicalism. If the English people look upon our divisions with indifference, the proletariat of the Continent will look upon them with contempt.

There are many other directions in which a Federation should unite our forces. For instance, there are all those national services which relate to the immigrant, the emigrant, the prisoner, and also to large classes such as those for whom the Girls' Friendly Society undertakes. We are so hindered with maintaining what is unnecessary that we have neither time nor means to add to our commitments. But I wish in conclusion to point out that the days may surely come when the Free Churches may require to speak with a united voice on some great and vital Christian issue, not as denominations, for these have little weight, but together and in concert with the whole Christian Church of this land. Those who are familiar with Russian literature know the strange obsession which Antichrist has for Russian writers. Thus Vladimir Solovyof, in *War and Christianity*, devotes the second half of the volume to Antichrist.

Dostoievsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, suddenly leaves the story and begins to discuss the coming of Antichrist. They seem to think that some colossal form of evil will arise in the world and set itself in a vast opposition against God. In that hour the Church, the whole Church, will have to fight for its very life. Perhaps they are right. Antichrist may come in some gigantic forces or movements of evil, sweeping like a foul, dark flood over Christian civilization. As the early Church confronted Paganism and resisted it even unto blood, so we may have to set ourselves in union for the defence of the Faith.

CHAPTER XI

SOME DIFFICULTIES AND OBJECTIONS

“ I beheld then that they all went on till they came to the foot of the hill Difficulty ; at the bottom of which was a spring. . . . He lift up his eyes, and behold there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was Beautiful ! ”

JOHN BUNYAN.

It has been my lot at representative conferences up and down the land to listen to every objection to the proposals for Free Church unity which could present itself to the human mind.

The first and most frequent criticism has been that this is only another Free Church Council under a new name. If this were so, it would be a fatal objection : partly because no one wishes to duplicate machinery, and partly that some churches, notably the Presbyterians and the Wesleyans, have for the most part stood aloof from the Free Church Council and regarded it with suspicion. This is not to depreciate the Council, which has rendered great service and made the proposed advance possible and inevitable. But when at the outset it stood at the parting of the ways, its founders, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and Dr. Charles Berry,

deliberately chose that it should not be directly representative of the denominations. Its executive was to be elected by its own annual assembly. It was not answerable to and did not report to the central authorities of the churches. It was the free voice of Nonconformity bearing much the same relation to the Unions and Conferences as the Church Congress bears to Convocation. The denominations did not regard themselves as committed by any of its proceedings or responsible for any of its decisions. They resolutely refused to allow it to interfere with their internal life or policy. The consequence was that the Free Church Council, driven in upon itself, became a platform and more and more political. Except as a platform and after the model of the Church Congress, perhaps it has fulfilled its mission. Now, on the other hand, the Federal Council will be exclusively representative. Every member will have a place upon it by the appointment of his or her own denomination. The subjects to be dealt with are primarily Church matters, such as faith, the ministry, united evangelization, the distribution of forces, agreements to prevent overlapping. The members of the Federal Council will not have the power to decide apart from their churches, but they will speak on the questions which arise with responsibility and intimate knowledge, their own views will be influenced by what they

find other churches prepared to do, and they will report to their Unions and Conferences as those who have seen the light shining upon the way of Free Church unity. It will be, in fact, the first time that the Free Churches, as churches, have ever made the attempt to act together.

An objection which I found very trying to my patience was that we do not want uniformity in our Church life. It is said that where there is life there is variety, and that where there is death you find monotonous sameness, the uniformity of the smooth pebbles on the shore or of the cemetery at Washington. It is like a chorus. It almost rushes unbidden to the lips. The man who has never given a moment's serious inquiry to the proposals themselves, and who has never reflected upon the wonderful processes of life which hold variations together and continually discard obsolete forms, cries "no uniformity." But is there anything in the world so uniform as a denomination? We of each denomination have the same point of view—we accept as axiomatic what is really very doubtful, just because we have heard it repeated so often by our set—we get moulded after the same pattern—in a denomination we acquire such a family likeness that you could almost tell what we were by looking at us—variations are suspected and frowned upon. Federal union would enrich and greaten our life and widen

our horizon; it would bring about the clash of thought, the free play of different ideas, the varying conceptions of faith and order which are compatible with evangelicalism. Does any sane man think that there would be any real danger of a dead and insipid uniformity in a union which included Baptists and Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Congregationalists?

Closely allied with this objection is the plea that an effective union would establish a tyranny, though this is directed against a corporate union rather than against federation. Yet it has to be met, for it is a resistance to tendencies which are operating in all the Churches. Now it must be freely admitted that the argument would have had great force in some periods of history and thought. In the reign of Edward III, for example, it was claimed that in England all heresy had been burnt out, and that there was only one form of religion in the land. Since then, after many struggles, in which a heavy price has been paid for the lessons of freedom, we have turned our backs for ever upon the method of compulsion. "The unseen forces are being mobilised all over Christendom. The spirit of freedom is on the wing, the Great Creative Spirit is once more moving among the nations in their unspeakable anguish." The principle that might is right is so discredited in the world to-day, it is so clearly seen to be the Germanic

theory of government, that it has no chance of gaining the least foothold in the Church. Ecclesiastics have learnt that to try to enforce a tyranny is to ensure failure, and that the only real victories are moral and spiritual. No union that we could form could escape the penalty of a fresh separation if it went awry. To attempt to violate men's consciences or to relapse into an unspiritual mind would be to push those who are spiritually in earnest over the edge of a new nonconformity. But I, for one, can never believe that just so far as the Church fulfils Christ's ideal of visible unity, so far and in that very hour it must fail in some other direction, and that even the evangelical Free Churches can only "be one" at the expense of some even finer issue.

A difficulty must be faced which is inherent in the difference between the Congregational and the Connexional order of government and administration. I presume that the decisions of a Methodist Conference are necessarily operative throughout the entire Body, subject to the provisions of trust deeds. Theoretically this is so, and it is quite compatible with a large measure of local autonomy. If the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, for example, ordered a collection to be taken for the Red Cross in all its churches on a particular Sunday, it would be taken. The Baptist and Congregational Union have no such authority, and

they certainly do not venture to issue anything which could be called an order. On the surface, then, it appears as if the different parties to the alliance would not come in on the same terms, but it is only on the surface. No Conference would ever attempt to ride roughshod over its congregations. The views of important minorities are always respected. Under the federal scheme nothing could go through apart from the goodwill and consent of the denominations. The difficulty is really a safeguard and not a hindrance. On the other hand, the Unions of the Congregational order can rely upon practically solid support from their churches for any procedure which has been definitely adopted by their Assemblies. As I have hinted, it is not a weakness to rely upon moral forces, and all the churches are alike in doing so. If I may take an example from the Baptist Union, though it has no power to compel any of its churches to federate under the Ministerial Settlement and Sustentation Scheme, including the system of General Superintendents, only twenty-four churches have refused. Thus, though we proceed along different paths, we, both Congregationalists and Connexionalists, arrive at the same goal. And I say it with reverent thankfulness, I feel it to be profoundly true that the Divine Spirit moves upon our Free Church assemblies, constituted by prayer, as upon the Apostolic Church on the Day of Pentecost.

A serious objection has been urged, chiefly from the point of view of the Presbyterian Church of England. Presbyterianism has always been most regular in the ordering of its ministry. Its standards require that its ministers shall be ordained by the Presbytery with the Laying on of Hands. Just as the Church of England regards itself as holding a mediating position between East and West, so the Presbyterian order regards itself as midway between Episcopacy and Congregationalism. Some of its leaders attach importance to what is known as "the transmission of Orders by a regular succession through the Presbyterate." In any case there would be unwillingness to take action which would impair the regular and historic standards of the Presbyterian ministry.

I sympathize with this attitude, and if the proposal were for corporate union, it would have to be explored very deeply. It cannot, however, be too strongly insisted upon that the Federation would leave the Standards and Order of each Church untouched except so far as itself consented. The inquiries of the Committee on Ministry appointed by the Oxford Conference revealed the fact that all the Churches in question regard the Ministry as a divine vocation, and ordination or recognition as the act of the Church and not of any merely unrepresentative individuals. There is no difference in essentials, and if I understand Presbyterianism aright, it is far

too evangelical to refuse Christian fellowship and co-operation with churches which maintain a true Ministry of the Word.

I would, however, rest the issue upon another ground. I would carry the decision to what I regard as the genius and mission of Presbyterianism in the ecclesiastical world. As I read its history, it seems to me that it is the Church of the large heart and the magnanimous temper. Its austerity has sometimes caused it to be regarded as formal, but it is not really so. Whenever any great question has arisen it has always taken a great part, often at the cost of sacrifice and tremendous labour. At three historic moments it has in these islands deliberately chosen a path which required almost more than human courage and resolution, and which imposed burdens that all but the noblest and most believing would have refused. We recall the names of some of its leaders, Guthrie, Candlish, Chalmers, Cairns, and Rainey, and we see how this spirit animated and controlled their career. I do not believe that the great soul of Presbyterianism will fail the Church at this hour of opportunity. Is it conceivable that for once it would lose its soul by seeking to save it? Each church as it enters the Federation will have something to contribute and something also to receive. Dr. Carnegie Simpson is reported to have said at the Synod that, since he came to England, two main

thoughts had been at work in his mind—to secure the better mobilization of the forces of the Gospel and at the same time to lift the Presbyterian Church into a larger current of the nation's life. The real question is whether Presbyterianism will venture something for the cause of Christian Unity. Will it join hands with other evangelical churches and thereby lift up among us all the conception and the ideals of the Ministry? This is its rôle in the Federation. Many churches among us have been loose in order. They have placed the emphasis upon liberty rather than upon order. They have not felt so deeply that the regular and ordained ministry is a fundamental part of the structure of the Church, that the minister is called by Christ as certainly as was the apostle Paul, that he is separated to the gospel of Christ, that he turns his back upon the rewards and prizes of the world, that he goes to his work upheld by the conviction that the Lord Who called him will sustain him unto the end. And already—it is very significant—Presbyterianism, through the chairman of the Committee on Faith, has greatly influenced other churches, as is evident in the article on the Ministry—

“The Ministry is an office within the Church—not a sacerdotal order—instituted for the preaching of the Word, the ministration of the Sacraments and

the care of souls. It is a vocation from God, upon which, therefore, no one is qualified to enter save through the call of the Holy Spirit in the heart; and this inward call is to be authenticated by the call of the Church, which is followed by ordination to the work of the Ministry in the name of the Church."

Again, it is objected that a federation will not ensure authority adequate to deal effectively with overlapping. Even a corporate union like the United Free Church of Scotland, or the United Methodist Church, is compelled to proceed very tentatively and slowly, and cannot fly in the face of local sentiments and usages. It will be much more difficult, if not quite impossible, it is urged, for a federal union to move the village sectarian, the autocratic trustee, and to dislodge the principle of denominationalism now that it has become so firmly entrenched behind the walls of the sanctuary and in our religious system. The difficulty is not lessened by the fact that our people have been taught to think first, if not exclusively, of their own church, nor must it be forgotten that the different Causes in a small community do not like one another. They may love one another in the abstract as Christians, but in the concrete their affection is tempered by certain qualifications. It is not going to be easy, after generations of sectarianism, sud-

denly to switch the churches on to a different line of thought and sympathy. No one can read the hesitating terms of the section dealing with this matter in the report of the Oxford Conference committee without feeling that some of its members were not very sure that it was "practicable and expedient to deal with the overlapping that has arisen in the past." We are all aware that efforts have been put forth from time to time to unite rival congregations in small places, but with little or no success. It is simply distressing that the members of little adjacent congregations have not sufficient Christianity to be willing to worship God together, and that they are encouraged in this unchristian attitude by their leaders.

The difficulty of the problem was borne in upon my mind during one of my tours on behalf of Church Unity. I was travelling to the annual Conference of one of the large denominations, and in the same compartment with me were a number of country delegates. We were quite unknown to one another, and I did not reveal my identity or my errand. I gathered from their talk, which, like that of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, was about good things, that they were simple, earnest and pious, they had been born in their denomination, they had laboured for it, they loved it. The chapel with all its memories and associations meant a great deal to them. The larger outlook of the Church

seemed to have no place in their thought. A doctrine of the Catholic Church had not come within their view. As I looked at them, a real anxiety gathered in my heart: I felt that they were part of my problem. I asked myself whether they could ever care as much for the one united Free Church as they had done for the little village chapel. I felt that it all depended on whether they were good enough, not on whether they were good, for they certainly were—but were they good enough? The troubles of our Churches generally arise through people who are good, but not good enough. Larger issues are lost sight of. Congregations are rent in twain on questions so pitifully small that they are not worth a moment's consideration in a lost world, and would never receive it if in some misguided way they did not claim to be related to conscience and principle. It must be confessed that men of the world frequently have a juster view of the relative importance of questions of conduct than members of churches. With regard to overlapping, there is only one hope. Obstacles which have resisted puny individual efforts have often been swept away by a flood. A remedy can only be found on a large scale. Only in a movement of the Spirit of God throughout the churches, only as a breath of nobility and enthusiasm sweeps over them, only as they are carried away from the land-locked inlet into the open sea, can

a sufficient moral and spiritual force be obtained. This thing is too great and difficult to be achieved in a committee-room. It must be reached by the uprising of the people, by a vast, concerted, magnanimous plan under the impulse of Christian love and a passion for the salvation of the people. We make a great mistake if we suppose that our Churches are chiefly influenced by what is sectarian and narrow. They have been born in idealism, they represent in the world to-day the men who once were ready to sacrifice home, country, possessions, even life itself, for the sake of an ideal. That which really appeals to them, and that will in the long run determine their course of action, is the will of God, not expediency or interest, but what God wills them to do, and we need not be afraid to rest the whole weight of our cause upon that issue.

I am not unaware of the difficulties in dealing with overlapping, but there are still greater difficulties in letting it alone. It is an offence to the conscience both of the Church and of the world. No one really defends it. If the Free Churches are to be forever cowed and dominated by the smallest and narrowest minds and by timorous counsels, no solution can be found. But if they cast themselves upon what is noblest and best in their people, they will have many welcome surprises. In surrendering what is sectarian, they will lose nothing but their prejudices. When I think of what men who

make no pretence of religion are giving up to-day for the sake of England; when my mind wanders to that unforgettable scene in the Antarctic Circle when the brave explorer, Oates, went out from the hut into the night and the trackless snow and ice to die that his comrades might reach the goal; when I think of these things and am told that the temper of the Free Churches is such that to save the soul of England they will not give up an indefensible system, I reply, if such is the case, then let not the members of the Free Churches expect to satisfy the conscience or retain the allegiance and respect of their fellow-countrymen.

It would be wearisome to pursue this line of inquiry any further. *Solvitur ambulando*. Difficulties can easily be discovered by those who are already disposed to cry, "There is a lion in the way." But the soul of the Free Churches is being tested by this issue. To be quite frank, the real uncertainty as to the issue of this movement is quite apart from the questions I have already raised in this chapter. It is briefly whether the Free Churches can supply the leadership for such a vast and strenuous undertaking. I do not conceal from myself that, in the world's history, leadership has always been the decisive factor. In religion you find Mahomet, in thought Plato, in war Napoleon. There have been soldiers' battles, but it seems to be the order of human life that the soul of a movement, its momentum, enthusiasm,

direction should be gathered up in one personality or in a group of personalities. If we look back upon some victorious campaign, an emancipation, some great constructive achievement in religion or philanthropy, perhaps we have a dim sense of what it has cost those who led the van from the days when there were few to follow, right on to the pealing trumpets and waving banners of the final victory. I confess that when I read a biography of Abraham Lincoln, or Wesley's Journal, the conviction comes upon me with tremendous force that the price must be paid in travail and tears and loneliness if any deep and abiding advance is to be won in the Church or in the world. The price is something more than a fitful appearance at a committee or a casual and indifferent thought. There can be no question that an army is waiting to be led, but can a headquarters staff be supplied? Through its very system a heavy drain is always made by a Free Church upon its leaders. They become involved in its machinery, and there is little room for freedom of action or strength for additional burdens. With all the goodwill in the world, the heads of a denomination cannot make more than twenty-four hours in the day. We must look to the younger men to supply the need. It is pre-eminently their question. This generation will be compelled to advance or perish in the wilderness. Moses may see the Promised Land from the

heights, but Joshua must enter in. David may plan the Temple and prepare for it, but the builder must be Solomon. It is always an open question whether great men create movements or movements create great men. We were most of us too old at Oxford. We need the undimmed faith and the unbroken courage of younger men to take up the tasks and bear the burdens, and we must give place to them and rejoice that God raises up successors as we pass from the scene.

But whatever it may cost any of us, it cannot cost too much. It is worth it all. Christian Unity itself, after all the embittered and tragic divisions of the Body of Christ, may well fill our prayers, our energies, our dreams. The situation is serious because so many earnest and spiritually minded men are asking whether the Church is destined to survive. Far more people than many of us realize are thinking to-day that religion itself must find a new instrument and that some freer institution, unhampered by obsolete traditions, prejudices and forms, must meet the needs of the modern world. Meanwhile, England is not being saved by its churches, and it is not on the way to being saved by them. They cannot reach the people or move them in their disunited state. If they would come together and bend their vast resources in unity to the one end, they would usher in a day of national religious awakening such as no living man has ever seen.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND REUNION

Cranmer. O higher, holier, earlier, purer church,
I have found thee and not leave thee any more.
It is but a communion, not a mass—
No sacrifice, but a life-giving feast !

ALFRED TENNYSON.

I PASS now from the proposals for federation to discuss the question of the reunion of the Evangelical Free Churches with the Church of England. In my judgment, federation is not a practicable method of union between Nonconformity and the English Church. There is no middle way between the present separation and corporate union. Federation would imply something contrary to the convictions of the larger part of the Church of England, and if it were possible it would mean that the historic differences between ourselves and the Church of England had ceased to have any serious significance, and in that case it would be infinitely better to take the greater way of corporate union. But we must not forget that our aim should be nothing less than to bring to an end that tremendous cleavage in the religious life of this realm which followed upon the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

No good-hearted Christians can look upon this cleavage without misgiving, or feel it to be anything less than "an intolerable burden to find themselves permanently separated in respect of religious worship and communion from those in whose characters and lives they recognize the surest evidences of the indwelling Spirit." Here is the rift, the separation, the friction in every town and village and hamlet, never forgotten or healed for a single hour; sometimes rising, if not into nobility, at least into magnitude, and sometimes very small and bitter; evidenced in society, journalism, literature, civic and political activities. Sometimes you feel it like a subtle undercurrent, and sometimes like a shadow resting upon English religious life. And all the while, to some of us, even of those who are outside it, this Church of England is very great and glorious, rooted in the English soil, interlaced with English history, carrying, wherever it goes, the English spirit. Its scholars, divines, preachers, its great confessors and bishops, these quiet rural churches, these fanes and cathedrals, these towers and spires, lifting up men's thoughts, they are part of our mother England. More than that, they are part of the Christian heritage. Yet as we dream of reunion, it may well daunt us to reflect on the vast organizations which have grown up in the passing centuries, becoming harder and more tenacious, and we may well ask

ourselves if there is any way out of the maze.

If we go back in thought to the beginnings of Nonconformity, we may find a clue to reunion. It is only in appearance that it came about in one decisive hour. When the door of the Savoy Conference closed behind Baxter and his colleagues, it seemed as if something was done which had the aspect of finality, and that it might all have been so different. This, however, is only a superficial view of the situation. It had to be. Religion in England had to learn the lesson and to travel by a hard and bitter way. The Reformation itself had set an example of separation, and it was only carrying it a step further when companies of earnest men and women here and there, with the Bible in their hands and in the light of conscience, broke away from the Church established by law. Successive attempts at Separatism were almost wrecked by narrow and violent leaders, while the piety and learning of Andrewes and Hooker proved to be the most effective propaganda of the Church of England. But the Reformed Church had a political as well as a religious character. James I held the theory, "no bishop, no King." Charles I linked the throne with the tenets and persecuting policy of Laud. At the Savoy Conference, Passive Obedience to Kings was the *motif* of the play. The Puritans were in the Church of England, and

had small love for Independency, but they were driven more and more to take sides with it by the course of political events. At length they broke with the English Church, and Separatism received a great accession of dignity, learning and strength. Two features of that stormy time stand out in striking relief. The spirit of the age was intolerant; it was eikonoclastic, not eclectic. The issue was no mere academic difference of opinion, for too often the triumph of one party in Church and State had meant the stake or the headsman's axe or exile for the other. And the second manifest aspect is that many of those who were engaged in these disputes were in no mood to agree. Their temper was hostile and dangerous. They were not anxiously endeavouring to see the good in each other's system of thought or trying to harmonize theological differences in a higher unity. They had not the eirenic temper in which unity can be preserved or won. Their one idea of peace was unconditional surrender, nor were the terms of surrender to be disguised or made more palatable. "Had the Puritans," says Dr. Calkins, "but been less headstrong and radical in their demands, and had the Churchmen but been broader and more fraternal in their sympathies; had the Puritans been less insistent on breaking with the historic past of the Church, and had the Churchmen been more in touch with

the age they had helped to produce, there had never been the great and lamentable failure to understand each other, and to compose the great ideas for which they stood."

Such reflections may make us more hopeful for the present time. At least they may encourage us to press on with redoubled zeal for that better relation and understanding without which reunion would be an empty achievement. For the temper of our time is eirenical. The Catholic and the Puritan have both felt the sorrow and shame of division, and neither of them is disposed to take the part of the Pharisee over against the Publican. They have had a vision of something glorious and transcendent, and that the true Church is not exclusive but inclusive. The sectarian will always say that this is due to an attitude of indifference, and because truth is more lightly held now than in the past. But it is not given to any one communion to express or to hold the truth in all its vastness and complexity; and since truth is inert until it is bound up with life, its religious value can only be known when it is gathered together in its fullness in the Body of Christ. Again and again the present Archbishop of Canterbury has called a number of Free Church ministers for prayer and counsel at Lambeth, and as I have marked his devout spirit and pre-eminent wisdom, my mind has gone back to

the days of Whitgift and Barrow, and to the painful trial of the tortured and distracted Separatist.

Lord Chancellor. What is that man? (*pointing to Canterbury*).

Barrow. The Lord gave me the spirit of boldness, so that I answered: He is a monster, a miserable compound, I know not what to make of him: he is neither ecclesiastical nor civil, even that second beast spoken of in Revelation.

Afterwards, in his prison, a better spirit prevailed. "The Lord pardon my unworthiness and unsanctified heart and mouth, which can bring no glory to the Lord or benefit to His Church, but rather reproach to the one and affliction to the other." Those days have gone. They seem as amazing to us as our divisions will seem to those who shall come after us. A different spirit is abroad. There is a longing for unity. The power of prayer and of Christian love is inexhaustible. It is illustrated on every hand. A bishop of the Church of England has preached from a Baptist pulpit. On the Sunday appointed for intercession, in many places a Free Church minister preached in the Parish Church. In one cathedral, at least, clergymen and ministers alternately conducted a service for half-an-hour each through the larger part of the day. It is a time of national burden and sadness. In every home there is sorrow and mourning, and in many there is death. In the storm

which is sweeping over the world nations, classes and individuals are coming closer together. A sense of shame has fallen upon the Churches that while so many secular unions should have taken place; that in Parliament political parties have formed a coalition; that nations long separated by historical feuds and jealousies have united against the common foe; that in France the British Army is under the supreme command of a French general; and that when religion itself is in peril before the advancing flood of materialism, unbelief and indifference, when the existence of the Church is threatened from every quarter, there should be so many in its ranks who have learnt nothing, forgotten nothing, and who have no idea that the world is eyeing them curiously as though they were startling shapes emerging out of abandoned graves.

The Catholic and the Puritan are complementary to each other. They need each other for full-orbed faith and order. Let me try to indicate the chief points of difference. Of course, I am speaking generally and without the qualifications which exact definition would require. To me, the greatest thing about the Catholic Church is that it has kept the faith. In all its long history it has never wavered or weakened before its foes. It has never tried to make terms with the world by giving up any part of the deposit of faith. At its heart you

find the Gospel. When the Catholic Church has been pressed or beset, instead of lowering its flag it has re-uttered the central and fundamental things, the Trinity, the deity of our Lord, the Incarnation, the Atonement. Catholicism has produced saints, but never, I think, a saintly Church or a saintly nation; it has lacked something, missed something. Puritanism also has produced saints, and, I think, once a saintly Church, but never a saintly nation. To-day it seems to me that neither Catholic nor Puritan produces a saintly Church or a saintly nation. Catholicism stands for authority, Puritanism for freedom; Catholicism for the sacrament, Puritanism for the Word; Catholicism for the Church, Puritanism for the Gospel; Catholicism for the cloister, Puritanism for the open air. But they come together in this, that they both regard religion as the chief and real business of life.

Each has a contribution of incalculable value to make to the other. The Church of England lays the chief emphasis upon the Church, and on the other hand there can be no doubt that in the Free Churches the Church tends to become a shadowy idea. It degenerates into a congregation assembled to listen to one man. If the preacher has no message, no gift in prayer, the Free Churchman in the pew is inclined to think that he has received nothing. Now I find myself in the strongest antagonism to any such

conception of the Church or its worship. No community can afford to ignore the power and value of personality, but in the deepest sense the worship of the Church is independent of any personality. It is not simply what the worshipper brings to the act of worship or what any individual may convey to him. I may illustrate this distinction by the difference between Wordsworth's conception of nature and that of Tennyson. To the latter, nature was not a living thing, conveying its own message to the soul of men. There was no pre-arranged harmony between the soul of nature and the human spirit. The hero in *Maud* brings his own mood to nature and finds simply the reflection of himself. But Wordsworth thought of nature as a living creation of God, able to communicate its own spirit to man if he would only yield himself to its influence.

“ Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress :
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.
Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking? ”

In the same way the Church waits for the worshipper and is ready for him. It was there long generations before he came and is charged with infinite grace and mercy

and strength. No one is born into the world simply as an individual, but as a member of the social union. The social order waits for him; it has constructed forms of life, categories of thought, a language he must use; it has history, tradition, accepted ideas. If they are wrong, then the individual must rise up and change society or shatter it. So the Church waits for every soul. It has memories, associations, gifts. It sheds a divine and sanctifying influence. It hands on from age to age experiences of God, truths and ideals. It has constructed rich forms of worship which are like well-trodden ways to the mercy seat. It has ministries and sacraments; above all, it is the trustee of the Gospel and the channel of grace. So that the worshipper has not to begin as it were *de novo* and to construct everything for himself. "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant."

On the other hand, the Free Churches place the emphasis upon freedom. This would be their contribution in reunion, and it is of tremendous importance in that new time upon which we are entering. All over the world the cause of freedom is advancing.

Thrones and kings are tumbling before it except in our own land, and the security of our throne is in the balance of authority and freedom. In its most violent form it is revolution, and in its saner aspect it is an atmosphere, a breath of life and energy. All men breathe it, all churches are influenced by it. There is no solution unless we take it into account. In any plan for the future we must not ignore it. Every church has its own tradition. Insensibly we are all moulded and affected by the tradition we have received. The tradition of the Church of England is one of reverence and beauty and order; of worship carried on generation after generation in words that have become sacred. Every priest of the Church of England is under the spell of this tradition. The most obscure curate in the loneliest parish moves among his flock greatened by tradition. He is not an individual, but the minister of a Church which was before he began to be, and will be when he has passed away, which brings to him far more than he can bring to it, and in every act and ritual he is moulded and strengthened by the tradition. The tradition of the Free Churches is of freedom, of personal responsibility, and of the free access of the soul into the presence of Christ, and every member of every little village chapel is strengthened and uplifted by it. If the light of freedom is shining to-day in the modern world, both in our own

land and in the Western Republic, it rayed forth first and chiefly through the plain windows of conventicles. But is there not a larger tradition—a common tradition? Can we not enter into a wider heritage in which reverence and freedom, order and beauty, the Church and the individual, have their rightful place? Freedom and authority—but order is the union of both. It is most difficult to get the exact balance between the two. The Free Churches have their own problems, but they are part of the price of freedom. You cannot have freedom without taking risks. I venture to think that it is useless to speak, not only to the Free Churches, but also to the new time, unless there is to be some measure of elasticity and some recognition of that spirit of democracy which is passing over the whole world. Probably a minister of the Church of England is as free as a minister of Nonconformity. But I am thinking chiefly of the spirit of freedom, and the readiness of the Church not to insist even upon valued and traditional forms and to commit itself to a freer and more elastic experience.

Closely connected with this is the position of the laity. Any scheme of reunion would certainly include a transformed diaconate. It is very hopeful that the Archbishops' Committee on "Church and State" recommends a system of government in which all

orders in the Church, both clerical and lay, would be represented.

And now I come to the crux of the whole problem of reunion, the question of episcopacy. It is no use concealing my conviction that reunion will never come to pass except upon the basis of episcopacy. I did not think so once, but that was simply because I did not understand it.

The Churches fall into two main groups, and these groups are based, the one on an evangelical and the other on an institutional conception of the Church. The first, or evangelical, hold that the Church of Christ is constituted by the Gospel and that its continuity is in evangelical experience. That is to say, the Church is the extension of the Incarnation, preserves the Faith, is endued through the gift of the Holy Spirit with supernatural power, and repeats in all its members, age after age, the miracle of regeneration. The second, or institutional, hold that the Church of Christ is constituted by episcopacy, not on a secular principle of expediency or through the mechanical transmission of grace, but by the institution of Christ Himself. "The Episcopate," says Dr. Gore, in *The Church and the Christian Ministry*, "with its claim of an apostolic succession, is . . . an essential and inviolable element of Christianity"; and again, "no ministry except such as has been received by episcopal ordination can be

legitimately or validly exercised in the Church."

If reunion can only be effected by an admission on the part of the Free Churches that the very existence of the Church depends upon a particular form of government, episcopal or any other, then the way to unity is finally and for ever barred. The Free Churches may admit that episcopacy is of the *bene esse*, but never that it is of the *esse*, of the Church. To do so would be to turn their back upon their history and their principles, and also to find unity through accepting the Prussian method of submission. They would declare with one voice that, in the sense of validity, the form of government is indifferent, that no form or order can be the criterion of a true Church, and that the Church of Christ does not emerge into visibility at a certain stage just at the point, and only at the point, when it has the historic Episcopate. They would take up this position because the contrary seems to assign too great importance to order, and is equivalent to the refusal in the realm of politics to recognize anything to be a true State which has not a monarchical form of government; because the Church in the New Testament appears to have been organized rather upon the model of the synagogue than of the temple. The records of the New Testament and of the Primitive Church reveal traces of three forms of government—epis-

copal, presbyteral and congregational. Probably the infant Church, immature and beset by foes, was feeling its way under the guidance of the Spirit to a unity of administration with which it could confront imminent perils. Ignatius was not combating the forms of Church government with which we are familiar. He was thinking of Gnosticism, not Congregationalism; of the bishop as the centre of unity, of the episcopate as the guardian of the Catholic tradition, and he laid no emphasis on the idea of succession to office. To a Free Churchman it is inconceivable that our Lord should have made any form of government essential to the Church, and yet have left its necessity so obscure that Christian scholars of the rank of Hort and Plummer and Gwatkin cannot find it, and, indeed, find the opposite. The argument that episcopacy is of the *esse* of the Church rests on too many phrases such as "must have been," "may have been," and "we should suppose." Indeed, Canon T. A. Lacey, in *Unity and Schism*, asks, "How can you make an *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ* of that which did not exist in the first age of the Church?"

From the other side, it is an idle dream that unity can be secured between the Church of England and the Evangelical Free Churches except upon the basis of episcopacy. I agree with Dr. Armitage Robinson that "it is, humanly speaking, inconceivable that unity can be re-established on any other

basis.” Of course, I do not mean episcopacy as we see it in history, monarchical, prelatical and unconstitutional. We may toy with the question, and find countless points of agreement, but when we get to close quarters, we learn that to seek any other basis than episcopacy is a pure waste of time. Free Churchmen may regret that it is so. They may, and do, wish that the attitude of the episcopal to the non-episcopal Churches was, in respect to all questions of ministry and sacraments, like that of the non-episcopal to one another. But the fact remains that any widespread attempt to surrender episcopacy would inevitably break up the Church of England; that its evangelical members, no less than its Anglo-Catholic, value episcopacy far too much to let it go; and that no responsible Anglican leader has any intention of forfeiting the mediating position which the English Church holds as between East and West.

Let us examine the situation. My purpose is not controversial, but eirenical, and many considerations occur to the mind which may give us pause before we abandon the search for unity. It is significant that there are immense numbers of both clergy and laity in the Church of England who hold the principles of the Reformation, and therefore, in the terms of the Second Interim Report, the “acceptance of the fact of episcopacy, and not any theory as to its character,” is

already at work as a basis of unity. More than this is not asked for within the Church of England. The Church of England is not united in a theory of episcopacy but in episcopacy itself as a form of government. The attempt to pin every one of its ministers down to a particular theory would be a hopeless failure. No one forfeits his right to hold and maintain his own theory by accepting the fact. In Congregationalism there are those who hold a theory of Independency which others regard as fallacious and as resting on historical error, but both are numbered within its ranks. It is the commonest thing in human society and co-operation to accept the fact but to differ on the theory, just as we accept the fact of the Atonement or of the Inspiration of the Scriptures with wide variations of theory, and often with no theory at all. To some in the Church of England, the historic episcopate means the sole channel of the transmission of sacramental grace; to others it means a constitutional administration by the bishop together with his synod and at least with the assent of the laity: to others, who freely admit the validity of a non-episcopal ministry, it means a method of Church order which has come down from primitive times. The Second Interim Report does not attempt to decide between these views, but suggests that reunion should be upon the basis of episcopacy as a form of

government. It is true that, especially since the Oxford Movement, a powerful section of the clergy and laity of the Church of England have moved along lines out of harmony with the principles of the Reformation, but it is certainly not the way to help the evangelical sections of the English Church for the Free Churches to keep the immense volume of their numbers, conviction and influence in permanent separation. Again, when we get to the heart of the Catholic faith, we find that it is mystical, and not mechanical. Thus Father Tyrrell insists that the Church is more than an institution, and that it is the conception of the spirit and personality of Jesus as an abiding presence in the Church which for the Catholic Christian makes the Church a sacrament. But do we not feel that we must face the gravest question of all? Is there any reality in the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as the guide and teacher of truth, and if so, can we believe that a form which goes back to the beginning of Christian history, and has taken its place "in the greater part of Christendom as the recognized organ of the unity and continuity of the Church," arose without the guidance of the Spirit? Or, on the other hand, can we believe that the guidance of the Spirit has been so completely withheld from the non-episcopal Churches that they have gone quite astray? The true dimensions of the Church will appear only as we bring together the

historic past and the Divine working in the present age. Unity will be reached "not by the method of human compromise, not by grudging concession, but by a willing acceptance for the common enrichment of the united Church of the wealth distinctive of each."

Differences are being reduced by scholarship, and perhaps help will come from this quarter more than from any other. Following upon the Lambeth Conference in 1908, Dr. J. M. Wilson made an appeal for re-examination of the questions which gather round Episcopacy in the light of the latest results of scholarly research. This appeal, seconded by the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been taken up by a number of scholars in "The Early History of the Church and the Ministry." In the essay on *Apostolic Succession*, Mr. C. H. Turner establishes that, in the early Church, to belong to the succession, a bishop had first to be lawfully chosen by a particular community to occupy the vacant *cathedra* of its church; that to Irenæus and Augustine, succession was in the chair of a single see and "from holder to holder, not from consecrator to consecrated": and again, that the patristic view of apostolic succession was wholly free from a mechanical conception of the sacraments. Or I may illustrate the part which scholarship is playing in the discussion by a quotation from an article

on "The Church" by the late Rev. Professor Gwatkin, who says: "It is indeed evident to all men, provided they read ancient authors as well as Scripture, that government by bishops has come down from the time of the Apostles. . . . If, then, we are told that the guidance of the Spirit ordained it for the Churches of the second century, we cannot but heartily agree. But if it be said that it is, therefore, binding on all Churches to the end of time, we are compelled to demur. As there is confessedly no direct command of Christ or His Apostles to make it a permanent and universal law, we must refer ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit in after ages."

Many questions will present themselves to the mind of the reader. Is it more important to seek unity or to be jealous for freedom? Perhaps the answer will vary according to our mood, our temperament and our experiences. It may well vary from one generation to another. They were right who once put freedom first, and we are right to-day who, under shell fire, put unity first, both in Church and State. Again, if it is urged that there can be no real unity between those who differ so widely, I gratefully acknowledge how much I have learned from some whose opinions I cannot share, and I would re-echo the prayer of Father Kelly in *The Church and Religious Unity*: "What matter our words and our arguments—mine

or another's? Oh! that God would show Himself, that He would take the matter into His own hands, that He would take us into His hands, that He would fulfil in us His Will, that we might be one as He is!"

Yet once more, the question of re-ordination will inevitably arise. A way must be found at a later stage and in a calm and gentle atmosphere. It must be considered simply as involving regularity within the Church of England, and not validity. In the most emphatic language, every suggestion that Free Church ministers are to cast any doubt or suspicion upon their own ordination to the ministry must be expressly excluded. On the other hand, there must be no readiness to press formal difficulties or to fail to see that if in the united Church the essential elements of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism are included, it is not unreasonable to crown the edifice with that principle of government which is so dear to the Episcopal Church. There are several ways in which a solution might be found, but if the reconciliation is to have its proper fruitfulness, it is certain that there must be a striking historic act in which visible unity is achieved.

I plead for the spirit and temper of unity. We shall not come together by debate. For centuries, England and France were locked together in conflict. Once the English bowmen had a grip upon the larger part of France. At Crecy, Agincourt and Poitiers

they fought. The battle-line swayed, generation after generation. At last Calais, the only foothold, was given up, and England retired, a watchful foe, to fight on at Trafalgar and Waterloo, but not a single foot of French soil did England retain. When recently I was in France, I went into a burying-ground where some of our heroes rest. I passed by the long lines of graves, with their inscriptions and their little crosses, and here and there an inscription to an unknown soldier. And what England could not win by war has been won by comradeship and sacrifice, for France has given in immemorial possession the soil where the British dead sleep. So may it be with us. The conflict has persisted through nearly four centuries. It has swayed now to this side, now to that, but can we not rise to comradeship and sacrifice, and win by Christian love what we have failed to win by war?

CHAPTER XIII

SOME OTHER MOVEMENTS TOWARDS CHURCH UNION

“ Have the elder races halted ?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there
beyond the seas ?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the
lesson, Pioneers, O Pioneers ! ”

WALT WHITMAN.

THE impulse towards visible unity is chiefly manifest among the younger nations of the Empire. In South Africa, Australia and Canada plans have been elaborated for the corporate union of the churches, which, though differing in many important respects, have a common basis in the idea that division is a source of weakness and contrary to the mind of Christ. These proposals hang fire for the moment, partly, though not entirely, through the War, but it is certain that the movement will go forward with redoubled energy when national conditions permit.

It is easy to see why the churches in the great Dominions should be restless under sectarian separations and should move more rapidly than ourselves. Here at home, custom dies hard, and there is unwillingness to root up, without long examination and

thought, anything which has stood for centuries. There is much less readiness to make experiments. The machinery of change is more complicated at home than in the younger lands. Our forms both in Church and State have something of the fixity of age. Any one of us who in the heyday of youth sets out to change the world, soon discovers that our world is very old and that it is not easily moved. But the younger peoples, with their free air and elastic step, are destined to lead the way to better and finer modes of life. We ought to be prepared to trust their instincts and their clearer eyes, for they are less hampered with prejudice and old tradition than ourselves.

There are, however, two causes which have operated as powerful forces towards Church Union in these new lands. The first is that it is a matter of life and death for the churches to unite if they are to reach and save the people. The field extends over vast spaces, generally with a sparse population; sometimes life is exposed to the perils of the lumber or mining camp, sometimes to the perils of loneliness; the immigrant from the old country, the pioneer pushes further out, and the widespread opportunity can only be met by co-operation. Yet again, we can imagine a certain irritation rising in the mind of the colonist under those distant skies. Even if we per-

sist in maintaining denominational distinctions which have been handed down through history, why should he be willing to do the same? They are not indigenous to the soil. They have lost much of their binding force for us in the Old World. They have little or none for the nations of the New World. We cannot shake ourselves free from traditions and institutions which are venerable if they are not always helpful, but the pioneer resents the attempt to transplant to virgin soil that which already shows signs of decay at home. Many of the controversies handed down from the fathers are dead issues. It may be said that truth does not change from East to West, but many of the forms of division are the denial of the most vital truth of all, the oneness of the Body of Christ.

All the movements to which I am referring are for corporate union and not for federation. We must look at them, therefore, as expressing the conviction that the present separate organizations will not solve the problems of the future, and as an effort to bring the united force to bear upon the religious situation. Such a scheme has obvious difficulties and can only be successful as it conserves in the United Church the distinctive and valuable elements of the constituent parts.

Though the attempt in each Dominion is limited to certain denominations, the aim,

more or less clearly avowed, is to set up a National Church. The fact that there is no State Church frees the problem from one difficult element. It is interesting to notice that the Church of England in Australia expresses its opposition to the establishment of a State Church. In the words of the Archbishop of Melbourne, "every member of the Conference was too conscious of the value of self-government to desire to part with any of the freedom enjoyed and to give it to secular authority."

The movement in South Africa began with the Presbyterians and is at present limited to them, together with the Congregationalists and the Baptists, the Wesleyan Methodists having withdrawn after the first joint committee at Johannesburg. In Canada, the negotiating churches are the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational, the Baptists having intimated that they "consider it necessary to maintain a separate organized existence." The initiative arose with the Methodist Church of Canada, which, in a resolution of marked breadth and wisdom, declared itself in favour of a measure of organic unity of all the evangelic denominations "to overtake the religious needs of the people pouring into our new settlements." It further declared that it would regard with great gratification a movement for the organic union of the three denominations named, "in no spirit of exclusiveness towards

others not named," in the devout hope that it would redound to the greater glory of God. There can be no doubt that the genuine zeal of the Methodists for unity and for evangelization has had the very best influence in all the negotiations. In Australia the movement has had a curious and chequered career. It began with the Free Churches and appeared to be on the eve of fruition, but has been complicated by separate approaches to the Presbyterians on the part of the Episcopal Church.

The South African Basis of Union is chiefly instructive at this stage in that it includes the Baptist churches. The difficulty in the case of the Baptists lies in the fact that their distinctive feature is not an opinion in the recesses of the mind but an external ordinance. It is a subject to which I have been compelled to give a great deal of anxious thought. No matter how much goodwill and generous feeling there may be, no solution can be found apart from absolute and mutual liberty. In a corporate union there can be nothing sectional, but an equal place for, and recognition of, both views of baptism. It has been a natural result of the decision of the Baptists in Canada to stand aloof that words have been introduced into the Article on the Church which are divisive, though their substance might easily have been expressed in a form which was not so. I must at this point bear witness

to the extreme consideration which the Baptist position received at the Oxford Conference. The Baptists do not understand themselves if they require any other basis of union than that of the New Testament, or if they are afraid to trust the effect of an open Bible, or if they are unwilling to respect the liberty of others. For my part, I vehemently maintain the great words of Milton, "For who knows not that Truth is strong next to the Almighty? She needs no policies, no stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and defences that error uses against her power."

The joint Conference of members of the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church in Australia bears the marks not only of a devout mind, but also of the spirit of freedom characteristic of a younger country. The conclusions were all that the two Churches concerned could desire, and would long ere this have led to a formal union if the Episcopalian members were prepared to disregard the Church of England in the mother country. There was no real difficulty as to creeds or sacraments or ordination, or as to the use of both liturgical and non-liturgical forms of worship. Indeed, I much prefer the reference to the sacraments to that which has been adopted in Canada: "We agree that there are two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and

the Lord's Supper—which must be ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him." Nor, I should imagine, had the Presbyterian members any reluctance to accept constitutional Episcopacy as the form of government. The issue must have been as to the full and equal recognition of non-Episcopal Orders, and it was met by the proposal that "each Church shall confer upon the Presbyters of the other the rights and privileges necessary for the exercise of their office in the United Church," but that in the future all ordinations should be by a bishop. I have already expressed my opinion that the Church of England will never officially agree to such a scheme. The procedure of 1610, when three Presbyterian ministers were consecrated to the episcopate in Scotland, does not establish a precedent, for it is not canonically required that a bishop shall have been episcopally ordained. [It is obvious that if a Church officially admits in its constitution that the Sacrament of Holy Communion can be validly celebrated even in a single instance by a minister not episcopally ordained, it cannot logically insist upon the principle itself. The whole superstructure tumbles down. It is not an adequate reply that it is just for this once, but never again. The Archbishop of Melbourne, who presided over the Conference, seems doubtful about it, for while he de-

clares that some such act will be necessary, he adds that he cannot "precipitate action which might result in schism and make the present confusion worse confounded."

The Basis of Union in Canada is much more elaborate, and is clearly the result of deep and protracted thought. Powerful minds have long been at work on this scheme, and its authors have something of the passion for unity. The first clause indicates the scope of the proposals, "the name of the Church formed by the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canada shall be 'The United Church of Canada.' " The ultimate aim is said to be "a Church which may fittingly be described as national." The declaration of faith in its extent and minuteness is out of harmony with the modern mind and does not compare favourably with that of the Oxford Conference. The polity proposed seems to bring together the best features of government in the uniting Churches and to avoid their weaknesses and defects. Perhaps, again, the scheme suffers from over-elaboration. The polity is set forth in an ascending scale: (1) The Pastoral Charge, which consists of a local Church or circuit of Churches. The affairs of the Pastoral Charge are to be managed by the "Session" elected by the entire body of members. (2) The Presbytery. (3) The Conference; and (4) The General Council, which is the supreme court.

All the governing bodies are to be equally composed of ministers and the laity. An interesting and valuable proposal is that "the policy of the Church shall be the maintenance of a limited number of thoroughly equipped colleges, due regard being paid to the needs of different parts of the country; amalgamation to be effected as soon as possible."

The proposed union has been submitted to the respective Churches, with the result that the Methodists have approved, only one conference out of twelve dissenting. The Congregationalists have also approved, less than one-third of the members voting, which seems to indicate uncertainty or indifference. The Presbyterian Church submitted the matter separately to its elders, communicants and adherents, with a vote as follows: for, 150,175; against, 64,927. In view of this large minority, the Presbyterian General Assembly referred the subject back to its Committees, believing that by further conference "practically unanimous action can be secured within a reasonable time." The three Committees have held further meetings, amended the basis, and have expressed the conviction that the movement "will be brought, by the blessing of the great Head of the Church, to a cordial consummation."

Such is in brief the story, and it suggests certain general lessons.

(1) The proposals for corporate union in Canada had their origin four years earlier in an attempt to deal with the problem of overlapping. A joint committee was formed to prevent, as far as possible, unseemly rivalry and waste of forces. Its work was a manifest failure, and its report, while couched in kindly terms, did not offer any real hope that anything would be done by that method, especially as regards already existing overlapping. Its evident ineffectiveness led to the definite suggestion of organic union, which does provide an adequate remedy. The failure of this attempt has a lesson for us. I think that in view of the special conditions in England, the Federal Union of the Free Churches should be given a fair trial, but anything less than this would be simply a salve for conscience, and a pretence. To deal with the admitted evil by way of a business arrangement between one denomination and another is to deprive the effort of the spiritual force and idealism which alone can ensure success.

(2) The course of the negotiations in each of the Dominions shows what a long time it takes to get anything done in the work of Church Union and how needless is the admonition to hasten slowly. So far, all these proposed unions are in the air and nothing has been decided upon. The Conference between the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church in Australia was held in 1906. In Canada, the movement

began in 1902; it was carefully considered in 1903, remitted to Church Assemblies in 1904, examined by Committees in 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907 and 1908. It was again discussed by Church Assemblies in 1909 and 1910; voted upon in 1911; referred back in 1912 and 1913; re-examined and amended in 1914. There it remains at present.

(3) The most hopeful feature of all these movements is the element of extreme goodwill. It is a great thing to be able to place on record that the discussions among the leaders have been marked by "brotherliness and disinterested effort." It is a fine and inspiring example for those of us who are called to lead in this country, for we cannot expect the rank and file of our churches to cherish lofty ideals if we are small and sectarian ourselves. "If gold ruste, what shal the iren do?" asks old Chaucer. Life has become very complex to-day, and we of the Churches must seek to learn from one another.

Finally, the stirrings and strivings of the younger nations have a meaning for us as sharing with them in the task and outlook of the British Empire. The great happenings in the world carry with them a tremendous significance for unity in every direction. We cannot think without deep emotion of these sons of the Empire who have crossed the seas to stand by our side in the vast struggle for liberty. The issue within the

Empire must be a closer knitting together in government, commerce and policy. "The only successful experiment," says General Smuts, "in international government that has ever been made is the British Empire, founded on principles which appeal to the highest political ideals of mankind." The time has come when a concerted attempt should be made to establish within the British Empire a united Church based on the evangelical faith and on the principles of the Reformation. It is good that the Churches in each Dominion should attempt to meet the problem of unity within their own borders, but it is infinitely better that they and we should recognize that it is a common problem and would admit of a common solution. At the close of the war, the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and of Great Britain will meet at Downing Street with other representatives to discover a basis of order for the new world, sorely stricken, but not bereft of hope and achievement. The accredited representatives of the Churches in the old country and the younger lands should meet in London for council when the war is ended and lay the foundations of a United Evangelical Church of the Empire.

CHAPTER XIV

REFLECTIONS OF A WAYFARER

“ I am a part of all that I have met :
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’
Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.”

ALFRED TENNYSON.

IN almost the last words of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, on the last day of his life, he said, “ I should like to paint and paint for seventeen thousand years.” And then he added aloud but speaking slowly, as if to himself: “ Why seventeen? Why not seventy thousand years?” Well, it may not be for any of us, and therefore *I* am impatient of that well-worn motto *festina lente*, which is the plausible excuse for inaction of all who hope that the existing order will last their time. There is not the slightest danger that anything great and good will advance too quickly. Sometimes I feel like a passenger in a crowded thoroughfare, who has urgent business and who cannot get along, hindered by those who saunter with leisurely step and casual air as if time were of no account. Yet I am very conscious that a great change has passed over

men's minds in relation to Christian Unity. Within the churches, thought and feeling are rapidly advancing. It is something to be taken seriously, to be faced as a living problem. When Dostoievsky came out from four years' exile in Siberia, he found that a new state of things had arisen in Russia, and he wrote in the *House of the Dead*, "I felt as if I was a straggler left behind and lost in the onward march of mankind." If we detach ourselves in thought and look at the present hour, we shall perceive how vividly the question of Unity is presenting itself to the churches. The sky has cleared. All men are turning their faces to a new vision. I am aware that a change has taken place in myself. I seem to myself to have travelled into a new country, and I want to pause and look back upon the way by which I have come.

Religiously, I was born in an austere land, and I travelled in boyhood through a narrow and rugged defile. If St. Paul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, I was reared as a Baptist of the Baptists, a dissenter of the dissenters. In my childish ignorance, it was a matter of continual surprise to me that any good and intelligent person could be anything but a Baptist. Of course, there were degrees of remoteness from the true faith, but I do not remember any kind of fellowship outside the pale of the denomination. As for attending a service in another

chapel, such an idea never entered the mind. The atmosphere was one of intense orthodoxy. Even novels were barred, and I remember that I almost confined myself to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Holy War*, and the *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. The chapel was the be-all and end-all of everything. Since I grew to man's estate, I have revisited the little chapel in the lovely village where my grandfather ministered, "on forty pounds a year." I am conscious that what is good in me came from that humble meeting-house. As I stood in its midst, I could almost touch the walls with my outstretched hands. I recalled the rapt and ecstatic hours of worship which some whom I have known had passed there, and I felt that it was holy ground. But Christian Unity seemed to have no place in my mother's thoughts and prayers. I cannot imagine a life more sweet and saintly or a spirit more devout than hers, yet Unity lay beyond her horizon. I write of these things because they illustrate the change which has taken place. There are many of that generation who have had a similar experience.

In the early days of my ministry in Norwich I came under the influence of Dr. Parker and Hugh Price Hughes. As to the minister of the City Temple, it was impossible to be with him without getting something of his breadth of view. He struck flashes of light in my soul. For

him, what was small and sectional had no interest. I recall him, as I knew him best, in his last years, sitting somewhat heavily in his chair, not saying much but every word a spark of genius. When Hugh Price Hughes was stationed at Oxford, with the daring of youth and inexperience, I wrote to ask him to conduct a United Mission in Norwich. His reply was characteristic, to the effect that he had never received any invitation which had given him so much joy, and that if the churches would only combine they would speedily rout the world, the flesh and the devil. In the eleven days' Mission which ensued, in the largest hall in the ancient city, and in which all the Free Churches took part, I saw, as never before, the immense influence of the churches in union to stir a whole community and even to shake it to its very centre. I set down another reminiscence of this period which made a deep impression on my mind. The clergy and ministers of the city had little or nothing to do with each other. Nonconformity was powerful in Norwich, but there was nothing which could be described as fellowship or a spirit of fraternity with the Church of England. The possibility of any such relation never crossed my mind. There was acquaintance and in one or two instances friendship with individual clergymen. The Church Congress was held in Norwich. It was a great

event. The whole city was moved. I was appointed by the local Free Church ministers to voice their welcome and good wishes at the first session, and I travelled all through the previous night after a meeting in a remote town in order to fulfil the engagement. I remember that my heart was very full of my message. New thoughts had come into my mind as I had reflected on the divisions of the churches. Never shall I forget the appalling sense of dismay which came over me when I rose to speak at the call of the bishop. Unfortunately, I have the gift of reading in men's faces what they are thinking and feeling. It all comes back to me again. I can see Bishop Creighton sitting with a perplexed air and gravely stroking his beard. I can see a little group which had just come back from Rome looking on the Free Church deputation with intense disapproval. Indeed, most of the assembly sat with an air of deep gloom, waiting for it all to end. At last it did end, and somehow I felt as if I had escaped out of an icehouse. It left on my mind at the time the impression that it was best for us to go on our own way and not to attempt these unwelcome attentions, and that the gulf was too wide for us even to shake hands across it. I suppose we must all be conscious that the climate has changed since then. At any rate, it has been my lot to speak to gatherings of clergy during recent years, sometimes to Anglo-Catholics,

and the reception has been conspicuously cordial. On two occasions these meetings have been arranged by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who has a genius for friendship as well as for preaching.

I am convinced that our separations and controversies are largely the result of misunderstanding. The good men of every church are a great deal nearer to one another than they think they are. Their affinities are not carnal but spiritual, and when the summer sun of Christian love shines on their hearts, it has its way with them. If we came together more, we should at least see questions from one another's point of view. We should be disposed to agree, which in itself is a great thing. In the year 1905 the Baptist World Alliance met in London, and I convoyed five hundred delegates, from all parts of the world, to Cambridge for the day. We went first to Elstowe, where we remembered what our fathers had suffered; then to Cambridge, where half of our number were entertained at lunch at Trinity by the Master, Dr. Butler. Was there ever any one so imposing and splendid in dignity, so gracious in courtesy? Goodness and loving-kindness were in the very tones of his voice. It was in the midst of the fierce education controversy. The Master insisted that Dr. Clifford should sit next him, and said that he had long wanted to meet him. As they talked together, I

saw all the war-paint disappear and the weapons laid aside, and when Dr. Butler spoke of what the world owed to Baptists, and his father in particular to Robert Hall, the magic spell was complete.

There is no contribution to Church Unity which I have read and re-read so often as the charge to his diocese by the Bishop of Chicago, Dr. Anderson, under the title *The Manifestation of Unity*. Its spirit and teaching have enabled me to understand how it was that the American bishops sent four Free Church ministers to our shores to promote the formation of a commission on Faith and Order. I have frequently referred in this volume to the Second Interim Report, which is an outcome of the movement. The meetings of the small committee which drew up both the first and second Reports have been intensely interesting. They owe a great deal to the Chairman, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who has always seemed to have the power to draw everything that was Christian and good out of those around him. Two of the most interesting figures have been the Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Oxford. The first is a statesman, a born ecclesiastic; with his clever brain he would have made one of the great churchmen of whom we read in history. I had not seen the Bishop of Oxford till these committees, and only knew him through his books. Every word he utters is listened to

with profound respect, for there can be no question that his is one of the most penetrating intellects of our time. I have been impressed by his conciliatory temper and his sincere longing for Unity. Our most fruitful conference was at Farnham Castle, where we were the guests of the Bishop of Winchester. On the first evening we sat till very late, but we were at a deadlock. We made no progress at all, and I suppose we all went to bed in deep depression. I certainly lay awake most of the night thinking of possible solutions. The next morning we met for prayer in the episcopal chapel, and afterwards at our conference it was as if the mists lifted, the sun shone upon our way. We seemed to see the landscape. And that morning the Second Interim Report was in substance agreed upon. *Laus Deo.*

The National Free Church Council has had a great share in linking the Nonconformist Churches more closely together. I owe much to it in bringing me into frequent contact and fellowship with my brethren of other denominations. Many of the hopes to which it gave rise have perhaps not been realized, and through an inherent weakness it has been inclined to take the line of least resistance. But it has been a great privilege to me personally to work so constantly and closely with its leaders, and especially with the two men who have chiefly moulded and directed its policy during recent years. I

always feel that Dr. Meyer is a united Free Church of England in himself. He does not belong to any one of us, but to us all. He has witnessed in every quarter of the globe to the things that matter and which bind all Christians together. I have prized my friendship with Dr. Scott Lidgett more than I can say, and not simply for his shrewd and wise judgment. He is a loyal Wesleyan, but he has not a shred of sectarianism in his nature. He is absolutely straight, and he never swerves from his word. I cannot think that any leader has done more than he to serve public causes and Christian Unity.

I am a wayfarer who has come out into a larger country. I see many things in a different light to-day, and I have altered my conceptions of relative religious values. But in all this I am only one of many who have travelled by the same way. It will be clearly impossible to maintain adherence much longer by the old ties. You have only to hear young people talk together frankly and freely in the homes of church members to realize that something must be done in a new way to kindle their enthusiasm and to retain their loyal service. "I care nothing about denominations," wrote one brilliant young Free Churchman from "somewhere in France," "but I should be proud to belong to a United Free Church of England." It is best for us as Free Churches to draw nearer together. It is

the first step. It would not postpone reunion with the Church of England by a single day, but would rather hasten it. The English Church would take up a much more sympathetic attitude to one great Free Church than to a number of unrelated denominations. The prospects are that the Free Church federation will come to pass. If there should be any one denomination which would not enter the Federation *con amore*, then it would be a mistake for it to unite, since it would be a mechanical and not a spiritual union, and it would frustrate the ends we have in view.

In any new time men are moved by an appeal to the imagination, and we must strive to build the new order upon the basis of an awakened idealism. The appeal must be large in its possibilities and fascinating in its outlook. I have feared sometimes that in asking for a federation, I have been content with too little, and that perhaps it would have been better to have taken the more daring way. It is said that we have not conciliated opponents and have chilled the ardour of friends, and that the larger aim would have created for itself an immense enthusiasm. In all this there is a measure of truth. The Rev. William Temple, in one of the National Mission pamphlets, relates that "there is a conversation recorded somewhere as having taken place between a great English statesman and

Cavour. The Englishman said, 'Why do you aim at anything so great as the unity of Italy? You can never reach it. Why not concentrate on something practicable, such as the reform of the Kingdom of Naples?' Cavour answered: 'I cannot get the reform of Naples because no one is ready to die for it; I can get the unity of Italy because thousands of Italians are ready to die for it.' " Cavour's reply has caused me much misgiving. It has been an anxious and difficult decision to take between the corporate union and the federation of the Free Churches, but for the sake of unity it was best perhaps, under all the conditions, to make a beginning with the more limited objective.

No one can forecast the course of religion or the place of the Church in this country after the war. Nothing will be taken for granted. The most venerable and sacred institutions will have to justify themselves. A great deal will depend on whether the churches attempt to carry the lumber of the past with them into the new time. "The churches must make an honest and searching review," says the Bishop of Hereford, "of their inherited systems, with the object of casting aside whatever has become unreal and worthless." It will be a criminal waste of opportunity if the churches, when the men come back from the war, fail to carry the appeal to that selfless

courage, that devotion to duty and that implicit idealism which has shone with such lustre in the trenches and in the field. Can the evangelical faith stir men's hearts again as once it did? It is one of the strange phenomena of physiology that the higher brain may sleep but the spinal cord carry on the movements of the body; so that soldiers have continued to march as at Mons and swimmers like Holbein to swim though they were fast asleep. I have a great dread lest the Free Churches should maintain automatic movements and cries while with brain and heart, and even conscience, asleep, they march on through the wonderful new world, missing its golden harvests and deaf to its significant calls.

I commit this cause to God with a tranquil heart. Many years ago, I learned the secret of rest in my public life, and since then I have really cared for one thing only, that my plans and purposes should be after the mind and will of God. It flashed upon me in reading the life of Dr. Chalmers. His practice was to set down in his diary some thoughts upon the portion of Scripture read in the morning devotions. He had just read the story of the Tower of Babel, and he set down that he had often framed plans and schemes which seemed easy and promising, but which had come to naught because God came down to the workers to "confound their language" so that they

were at variance and spoke with different tongues. Again, he had entered upon great tasks and undertakings which seemed difficult or impossible, but which had been carried through with ease and joy because the Holy Ghost caused the workers to speak one language as on the day of Pentecost. So I am at rest. I passionately desire the goal of Church Unity, but it is an issue I can leave with God. I have not the shadow of a doubt that it will be reached, but He will appoint the instruments and determine the time. And when I am tempted to be troubled by the defection or lukewarmness of some upon whom I had reckoned, I remember with Mazzini that "God dwells above the earthly heaven, and the holy stars of faith and the future still shine within our souls." We who believe in this cause must labour on, knowing that "it is only by ceaselessly dragging our nets through the waste waters that we may hope at last to enclose what we have sought patiently through so many dark hours of failure."

It is with bringing the Churches together as it is with the league of nations to put an end to war. The difficulties are so many and great that we feel it cannot be done, but for this very reason it must be done. It is impossible—but the Church is always called to impossible tasks, and there is no other rational outlook for the world or for the Church.

APPENDIX I

THE LAMBETH QUADRILATERAL

THE Lambeth Conference of 1888 adopted the following resolution—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God’s blessing made towards Home Reunion :

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol : and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

(c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.”

APPENDIX II

THE CONFERENCES BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES OF ENGLAND ON
CLOSER CO-OPERATION OF THE CHURCHES, HELD AT
MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD, SEPTEMBER 1916,
THE LEYS SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MARCH 1917, AND
THE BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE, LONDON, SEPTEMBER
1917

STATEMENT ON COMMON FAITH

PREAMBLE

Inasmuch as the Evangelical Free Churches of England have been led, in the good providence of God, to seek closer federation with one another for the better witness to and service of the Gospel, and inasmuch as some declaration exhibiting the substance of their common faith is desirable both as a basis of fellowship and co-operation and as a means of making known to others the truths for which these Churches stand, the following "Declaratory Statement of Common Faith and Practice" is issued in the name of the Federation. And at the same time, it is intimated as follows :

(1) The Evangelical Free Churches of England claim and cherish their place as inheritors, along with others, of the historic faith of Christendom, which found expression in the œcumenical creeds of the early and undivided Church; and this Declaratory Statement does not profess to be a comprehensive creed, but is a declaration of such truths as, in the circumstances, it seems proper to rehearse and emphasize.

(2) It is an essential element in the proposals for federation that each of the federating Churches should preserve its own autonomy as regards faith and practice; this Statement, therefore, is not to be imposed as a disciplinary standard on any of these Churches, nor, on the other hand, does it supersede or in any way alter the place of whatever doctrinal standards any of these Churches may maintain in their constitution.

DECLARATORY STATEMENT OF COMMON FAITH AND PRACTICE

I

There is One Living and True God, Who is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Him alone we worship and adore.

II

We believe that God so loved the world as to give His Son to be the Revealer of the Father and the Redeemer of mankind; that the Son of God, for us men and for our salvation, became man in Jesus Christ, Who, having lived on earth the perfect human life, died for our sins, rose again from the dead, and now is exalted Lord over all; and that the Holy Spirit, Who witnesses to us of Christ, makes the salvation which is in Him to be effective in our hearts and lives.

III

We acknowledge that all men are sinful, and unable to deliver themselves from either the guilt or power of their sin; but we have received and rejoice in the Gospel of the grace of the Holy God, wherein all who truly turn from sin are freely forgiven through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are called and enabled, through the Spirit dwelling and working within them, to live in fellowship with God and for His service; and in this new life, which is to be nurtured by the

right use of the means of grace, we are to grow, daily dying unto sin and living unto Him Who in His mercy has redeemed us.

IV

We believe that the Catholic or Universal Church is the whole company of the redeemed in heaven and on earth, and we recognize as belonging to this holy fellowship all who are united to God through faith in Christ.

The Church on earth—which is One through the Apostolic Gospel and through the living union of all its true members with its one Head, even Christ, and which is holy through the indwelling Holy Spirit Who sanctifies the Body and its members—is ordained to be the visible Body of Christ, to worship God through Him, to promote the fellowship of His people and the ends of His Kingdom, and to go into all the world and proclaim His Gospel for the salvation of men and the brotherhood of all mankind. Of this visible Church, and every branch thereof, the only Head is the Lord Jesus Christ; and in its faith, order, discipline and duty, it must be free to obey Him alone as it interprets His holy will.

V

We receive, as given by the Lord to His Church on earth, the Holy Scriptures, the Sacraments of the Gospel, and the Christian Ministry.

The Scriptures, delivered through men moved by the Holy Ghost, record and interpret the revelation of redemption, and contain the sure Word of God concerning our salvation and all things necessary thereto. Of this we are convinced by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men to and with the Word; and this Spirit, thus speaking from the Scriptures to believers and to the Church, is the supreme Authority by which all opinions in religion are finally to be judged.

The Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—

are instituted by Christ, Who is Himself certainly and really present in His own ordinances (though not bodily in the elements thereof), and are signs and seals of His Gospel not to be separated therefrom. They confirm the promises and gifts of salvation, and, when rightly used by believers with faith and prayer, are, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, true means of grace.

The Ministry is an office within the Church—not a sacerdotal order—instituted for the preaching of the Word, the ministration of the Sacraments and the care of souls. It is a vocation from God, upon which therefore no one is qualified to enter save through the call of the Holy Spirit in the heart; and this inward call is to be authenticated by the call of the Church, which is followed by ordination to the work of the Ministry in the name of the Church. While thus maintaining the Ministry as an office, we do not limit the ministries of the New Testament to those who are thus ordained, but affirm the priesthood of all believers and the obligation resting upon them to fulfil their vocation according to the gift bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit.

VI

We affirm the sovereign authority of our Lord Jesus Christ over every department of human life, and we hold that individuals and peoples are responsible to Him in their several spheres and are bound to render Him obedience and to seek always the furtherance of His Kingdom upon earth, not, however, in any way constraining belief, imposing religious disabilities, or denying the rights of conscience.

VII

In the assurance, given us in the Gospel, of the love of God our Father to each of us and to all men, and in the faith that Jesus Christ, Who died, overcame death and has passed into the heavens, the first-fruits of them that sleep, we are made confident

of the hope of Immortality, and trust to God our souls and the souls of the departed. We believe that the whole world must stand before the final Judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, with glad and solemn hearts, we look for the consummation and bliss of the life everlasting, wherein the people of God, freed for ever from sorrow and from sin, shall serve Him and see His face in the perfected communion of all saints in the Church triumphant.

These things, as all else in our Christian faith, we hold in reverent submission to the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit Who is Truth, and we shall ever seek of Him enlightenment and grace both to unlearn our errors and also more fully to learn the mind and will of God Whom to know is life eternal and to serve is perfect freedom.

And, being thus called of God unto the purpose of His redeeming love wherein He is delivering the world from sin and misery and is reconciling all things to Himself in Christ Jesus, and being animated with faith in the final triumph of our Lord, we set before us as our end and aim to carry the gospel to every creature and to serve and stablish, in our land and throughout the earth, His reign of righteousness, joy and peace.

Grace be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And to God be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

CONSTITUTION

Extract :—

IV.—COUNCIL AND CONSTITUTION THEREOF

The governing body of the Federation shall be the Federal Council, to consist of representatives, to be elected annually by the supreme authorities of the Federating Churches, and shall have a minimum repre-

sentation of three for each denomination federating. As a general principle there shall be an equal number of ministers and lay representatives, men or women, each of whom must be a fully accredited adult member of the Church appointing him or her. Vacancies arising in the representation during the year shall be filled up by the remaining members of the Federation upon the nomination of the denomination in respect of which the vacancy occurs. The Federal Council shall consist of (1) three representatives of each federating Denomination; (2) additional representatives for those denominations having a membership of over 15,000, on the basis of one representative for each 10,000 and fraction of 10,000 exceeding 5000; (3) ex-Moderators shall be *ex-officio* members of the Federal Council; (4) the Council so constituted shall annually at its first meeting co-opt additional members not exceeding ten, each of whom shall be a fully accredited member of one of the federating Denominations.

V.—POWERS

The following shall be the powers of the Federal Council :—

(1) To carry into operation the duties undertaken at the recommendation of the Committees on Faith, Ministry and Evangelization, and such further duties as may from time to time be committed to it.

(2) The powers to be exercised shall be advisory, except in so far as Executive functions may from time to time be entrusted to the Federal Council by the federating Denominations.

(a) In so far as the exercise of Executive functions affects all the federating Denominations no action shall be taken except by the consent of Representatives numbering together two-thirds of the entire Council.

(b) In so far as the exercise of Executive functions affects one or more of the federating

Denominations no action shall be taken except by the consent of the Denomination or Denominations concerned.

(3) No Executive functions shall be exercised by the Council without a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council then present and voting.

(4) No amendment of the Constitution shall be valid unless it has been recommended by a two-thirds majority of the Federal Council then present, and has been approved by the Annual Assemblies of the federating Denominations. If the denominations approving such amendment are represented on the Federal Council by representatives numbering two-thirds of the entire Council, but not otherwise, the Council may proceed to effect such amendment accordingly.

(5) The Aims and Objects of the Federation, being spiritual and moral the Council shall not entertain, neither shall any member of the Council be permitted to discuss therein, any question which, in the judgment of the Moderator, or (in the event of the Moderator's judgment being challenged) in that of one-fourth of the members of the Council voting, is not within the sphere of such aims and objects.

APPENDIX III

SECOND INTERIM REPORT OF A SUB-COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY AND YORK'S COMMITTEE AND BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ENGLISH FREE CHURCHES' COMMISSIONS, IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER

Extract :—

“ IN suggesting the conditions under which this visible unity might be realized we desire to set aside for the present the abstract discussion of the origin of the Episcopate historically, or its authority doctrinally; and to secure for that discussion when it comes, as it must come, at the Conference, an atmosphere congenial not to controversy, but to agreement. This can be done only by facing the actual situation in order to discover if any practical proposals could be made that would bring the Episcopal and non-Episcopal Communion nearer to one another. Further, the proposals are offered not as a basis for immediate action, but for the sympathetic and generous consideration of all the Churches.

The first fact which we agree to acknowledge is that the position of Episcopacy in the greater part of Christendom as the recognized organ of the unity and continuity of the Church, is such that the members of the Episcopal Churches ought not to be expected to abandon it in assenting to any basis of reunion.

The second fact which we agree to acknowledge is that there are a number of Christian Churches not accepting the Episcopal order which have

been used by the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightening the world, converting sinners, and perfecting saints. They came into being through reaction from grave abuses in the Church at the time of their origin, and were led in response to fresh apprehensions of divine truth to give expression to certain types of Christian experience, aspiration and fellowship, and to secure rights of the Christian people which had been neglected or denied.

In view of these two facts, if the visible unity so much desired within the Church, and so necessary for the testimony and influence of the Church in the world is ever to be realized, it is imperative that the Episcopal and non-Episcopal Communion shall approach one another not by the method of human compromise, but in correspondence with God's own way of reconciling differences in Christ Jesus. What we desire to see is not grudging concession, but a willing acceptance for the common enrichment of the united Church of the wealth distinctive of each.

Looking as frankly and as widely as possible at the whole situation, we desire with a due sense of responsibility to submit for the serious consideration of all the parts of a divided Christendom what seem to us the necessary conditions of any possibility of reunion :

- (1) That continuity with the historic Episcopate should be effectively preserved.

- (2) That in order that the rights and responsibilities of the whole Christian community in the government of the Church may be adequately recognized, the Episcopate should re-assume a constitutional form, both as regards the method of the election of the bishop as by clergy and people, and the method of government after election. It is perhaps necessary that we should call to mind that such was the primitive ideal and practice of Episcopacy and it so remains in many Episcopal communions to-day.

(3) That acceptance of the fact of Episcopacy and not any theory as to its character should be all that is asked for. We think that this may be the more easily taken for granted as the acceptance of any such theory is not now required of ministers of the Church of England. It would no doubt be necessary before any arrangement for corporate reunion could be made to discuss the exact functions which it may be agreed to recognize as belonging to the Episcopate, but we think this can be left to the future.

The acceptance of Episcopacy on these terms should not involve any Christian community in the necessity of disowning its past, but should enable all to maintain the continuity of their witness and influence as heirs and trustees of types of Christian thought, life and order, not only of value to themselves but of value to the Church as a whole. Accordingly we hope and desire that each of these Communion would bring its own distinctive contribution not only to the common life of the Church, but also to its methods of organization, and that all that is true in the experience and testimony of the uniting Communion would be conserved to the Church. Within such a recovered unity we should agree in claiming that the legitimate freedom of prophetic ministry should be carefully preserved; and in anticipating that many customs and institutions which have been developed in separate communities may be preserved within the larger unity of which they have come to form a part."

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